THE TRANSFORMERS

LEGACY

THE ART OF TRANSFORMERS PACKAGING

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THE ART OF TRANSFORMERS PACKAGING

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VICTORY SABER

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Part One: The Early Years

There's something truly magical about the package art of Generation 1 Transformers. There is perhaps no other element of the brand that is quite as iconic, as resonant, as beautiful as the airbrushed paintings adorning each and every box and card, lining toy stores and promising endless science fiction adventure.

But what, exactly, are we talking about here? Well, back in the early '80s, the folks at Hasbro faced a conundrum. How do you best use the packaging to let kids know that this really cool jet it contains can, in fact, turn into an even cooler robot? Certainly, photographs of the toys were one answer, but it was a bit dry. Fortunately for Hasbro, this problem already had a solution ready-made. Takara, the Japanese company who had developed most of the molds that Hasbro would license to become the first two years of The Transformers, used incredibly slick airbrushed paintings of the robot modes of their toys to convey the core feature, the ability to change form.

Hasbro embraced this strategy—with a vengeance! Whereas only some of the Diaclone and Micro Change toys licensed by Hasbro had artwork associated with them, every Transformers toy would feature artwork to showcase the transformation. Generally this was the robot form, as most toys were packaged in vehicle or animal mode. On occasions where this format was broken, such as the Jumpstarters or Clones, the vehicle mode would be illustrated. Even when Japanese art existed for a given toy, it was often redrawn to account for branding elements and color variations between the markets. Another difference in strategy was the standardization of backgrounds, with color variations separating the good guys from the bad guys. In contrast, each subline in Diaclone and Micro Change had a different background style.

The results were amazing. The unique aesthetic of the package art of The Transformers became closely identified with the brand. It would prove one of the more popular licensing elements, appearing on lunchboxes, bedsheets, puzzles, backpacks, pajamas, pencil sharpeners, games, cereal, towels, calendars, sunglasses, stickers, trading cards, and just about anything else you can imagine. The artistic style remained essentially unchanged for more than a decade, through all seven years of Generation 1, three years of Generation 2, and overseas with the Transformers produced in Japan and the United Kingdom.

With the what covered, that brings us to the hows and the whys. How exactly was this volume put together, and why did we choose to do it the way we did? One may naively think that we simply called up Hasbro and requested a copy of their archives, with the results in your hand after a few weeks of fiddling with layouts. Nothing could be further from the truth. You see, back in the early '80s, no one at Hasbro realized that, in addition to creating THE hot toys of the day, they were building incredibly valuable intellectual property. They can be forgiven, few of their competitors realized it either. After the work was done, the work was done. Art was often lost, thrown out, refurbished, or just misfiled. One Hasbro executive wistfully told us how the artwork for a prominent G.I. Joe hero was literally painted over to give him a new costume.

So, where DID the art in this tome come from? Well, Hasbro has managed to save a few pieces, 'round about 30, mostly original paintings. Additionally, Takara (through their graphics design firm, Part One) had an extensive archive of several hundred characters that were released in their markets. For the math inclined, there are about 750 pieces of art in this book, which means that official sources got us only halfway. There were serious gaps in coverage from where the US and Japanese markets diverged, largely late Generation 1, all of Generation 2, and early non-Takara-licensed pieces like the Deluxe Insecticons. That gap was largely filled by fans. Some had original artwork. A few had original photo negatives. Many more had transparencies (called chrome positives) that were used for licensing and production purposes. Style guides made up the rest.

One source which we did not turn to was actual scans of the packages. Oh, sure, we gave it a shot, but the sad reality was that the quality just wasn't there. The print on the original boxes was too poor, resulting in images that had to be much too small to use, and that was assuming that the image was unobstructed, which was generally not the case. Thus, there

SHOCKWAVE

Micro Cassette Robo
Jaguar (Ravage) Illustration

are the occasional gaps. This book isn't QUITE 100% complete for our scope (U.S. G1 and G2, Japan G1) but it comes close. By our count, we're missing just over a dozen unique illustrations, not counting repainted art and regional variations. We trust you'll forgive us these omissions.

Which brings us to this book, a true celebration of this artistic style. To make things digestible, we've organized things into four parts and fourteen chapters. Part One covers the early years, when the concept was fresh and new and kids were still getting used to the basic idea that a sentient alien robot could come from the planet Cybertron and disguise himself as a fighter jet or a Lamborghini or a space shuttle.

Things kick off in Chapter One with the Classic Era, toy concepts introduced in 1984 and 1985. Even today, these characters have a special resonance. The name Optimus Prime has truly transcended its origins to become a part of the pop culture landscape. There were a few sublines here but gimmicks were few and far between; most toys simply relied on the core concept of a robot that could change into another form.

Chapter Two covers the Movie Era, toys introduced in 1986-1988 excluding some specific sublines. In this timeframe, Hasbro transitioned from toys licensed from Japanese companies to toys they were producing themselves. Due to story and design considerations, many of the alternate modes took on a futuristic feel. The use of gimmicks expanded, to the point where most toys featured in Chapter Two can do something beyond a simple conversion.

But why wait? Adventure beckons!

Diaclone Dinosaur Robo
Triceratops (Slag) Illustration

THE TRANSFORMERS™

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE!

HEROIC AUTOBOT

TRANSFORMS FROM RACE CAR TO ROBOT AND BACK!

AUTOBOT WARRIOR SUNSTREAKER

AUTOBOT SUNSTREAKER

AGES: 5 & UP INCLUDES SNAP-ON WEAPONS & ACCESSORIES

Generation 1 Sunstreaker
MIB (Mint In Box)

THE TRANSFORMERS

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE!

EVIL DECEPTICON

START

CHANGE

CHANGE

FINISH

FIVE PREDACONS FORM PREDAKING!

TRANSFORMS FROM BUFFALO TO ROBOT AND BACK!

PREDACON 5 TANTRUM

Tantrum Pre-Production Package

1985 JAPANESE CATALOG ARTWORK

illustrators WANTED

Hasbro, Inc., the world's leading toy and game manufacturer, is seeking freelance, line art and full color illustrators for exciting product lines like G.I. Joe®, My Little Pony® and products from our Playskool®-Preschool divisions. Qualified candidates and design studios should have experience with:

- Technical line art illustrations for consumer assembly instruction sheets.

  Ability to do accurate perspective drawings and exploded views.
- Full color illustrations.

  Excellent drawing and rendering skills.

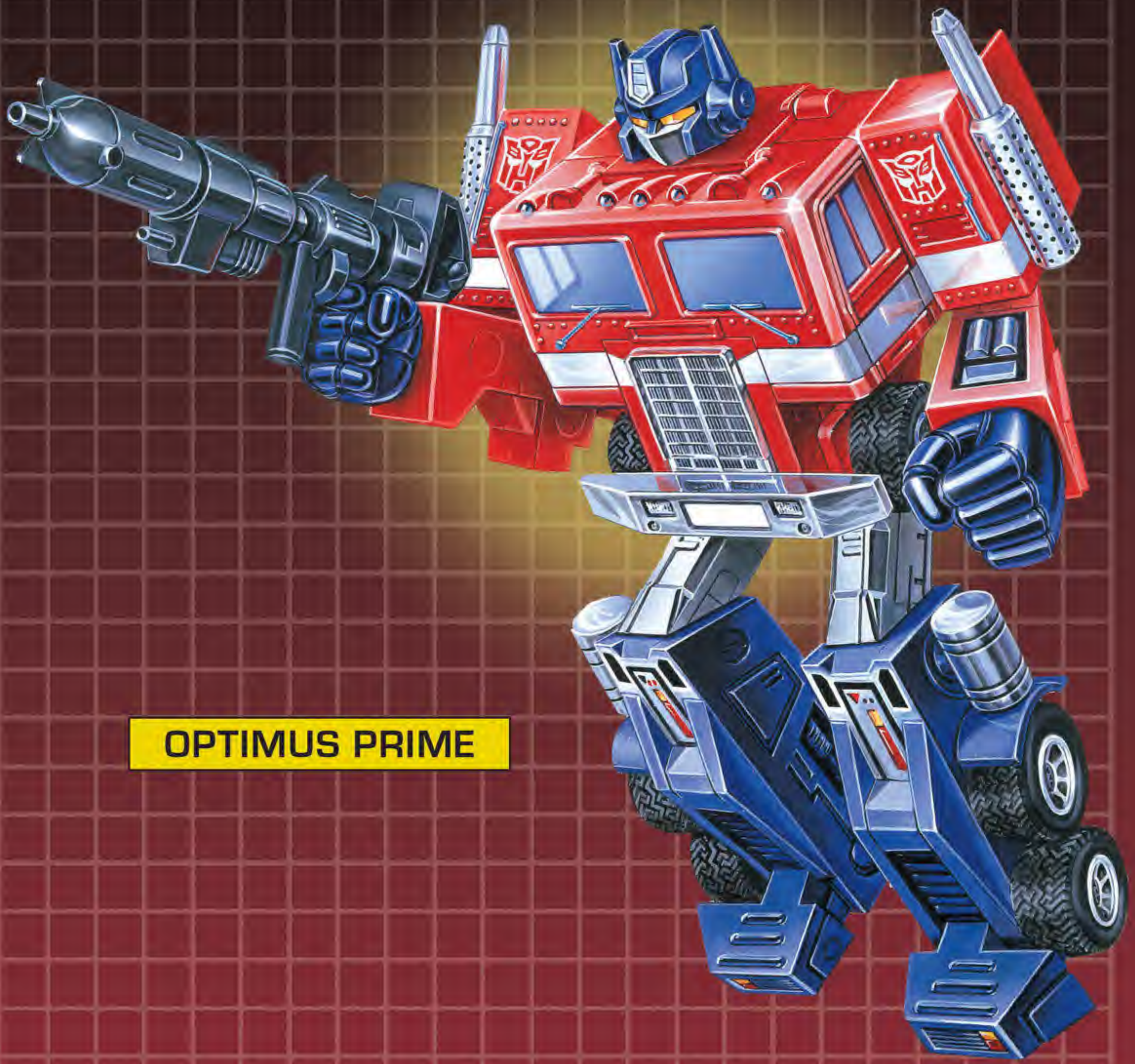
  Interaction within a dynamic, fast paced environment.

If you meet these requirements, please respond with sample to:

HASBRO®

CLASSICS AUTOBOTS

"It is a world transformed, where things are not what they seem." 1984 saw the debut of The Transformers, with the heroic Autobots battling the evil Decepticons.

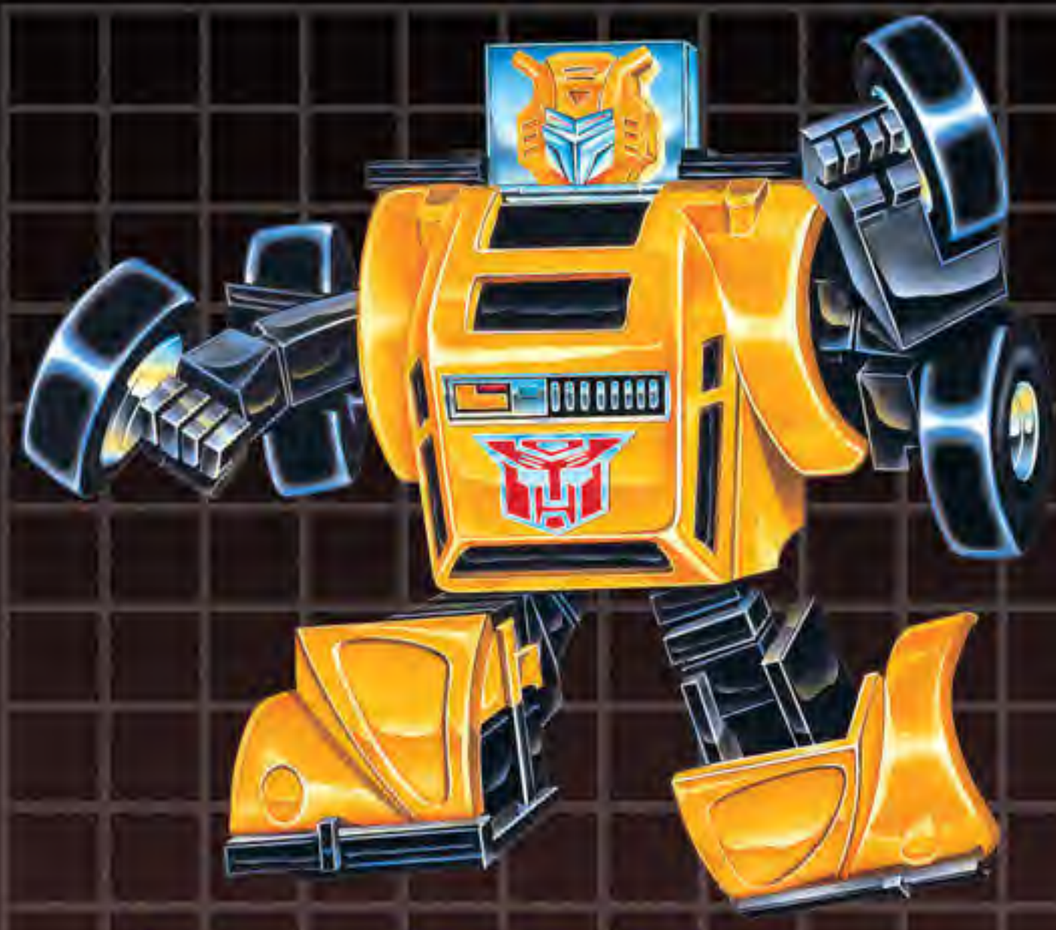


OPTIMUS PRIME

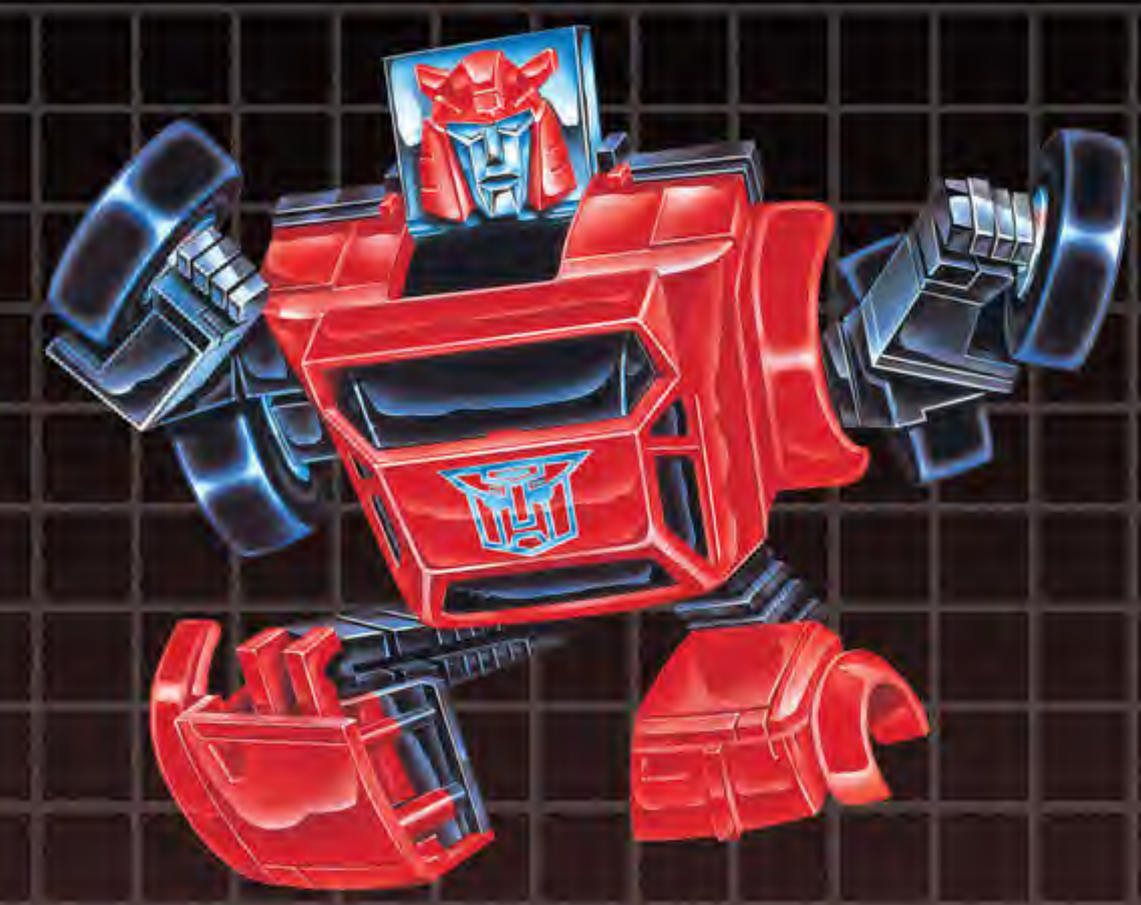
MIRAGE

TRAILBREAKER

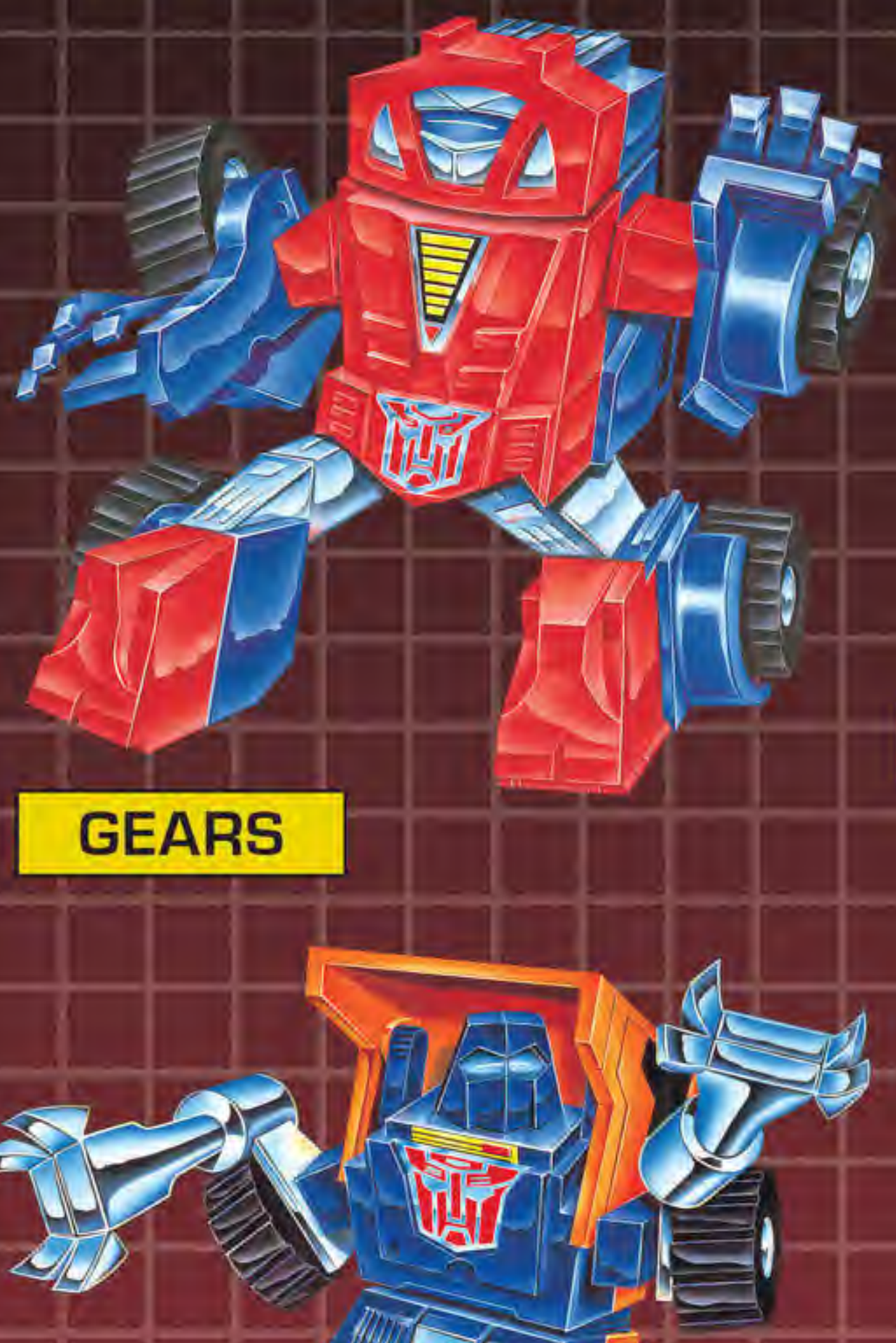
BLUESTREAK



BUMBLEBEE



CLIFFJUMPER



GEARS

BRAWN

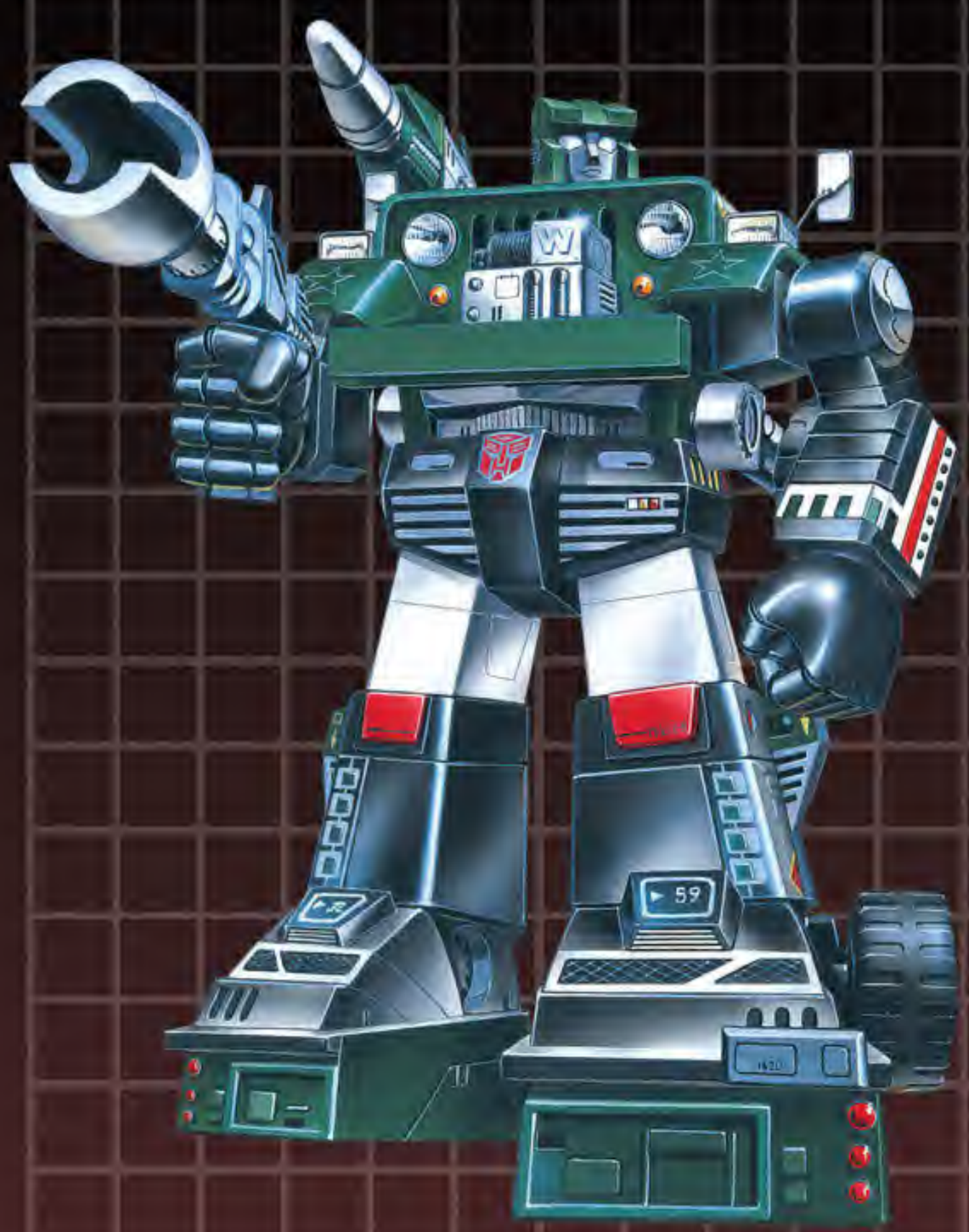
HUFFER

WINDCHARGER

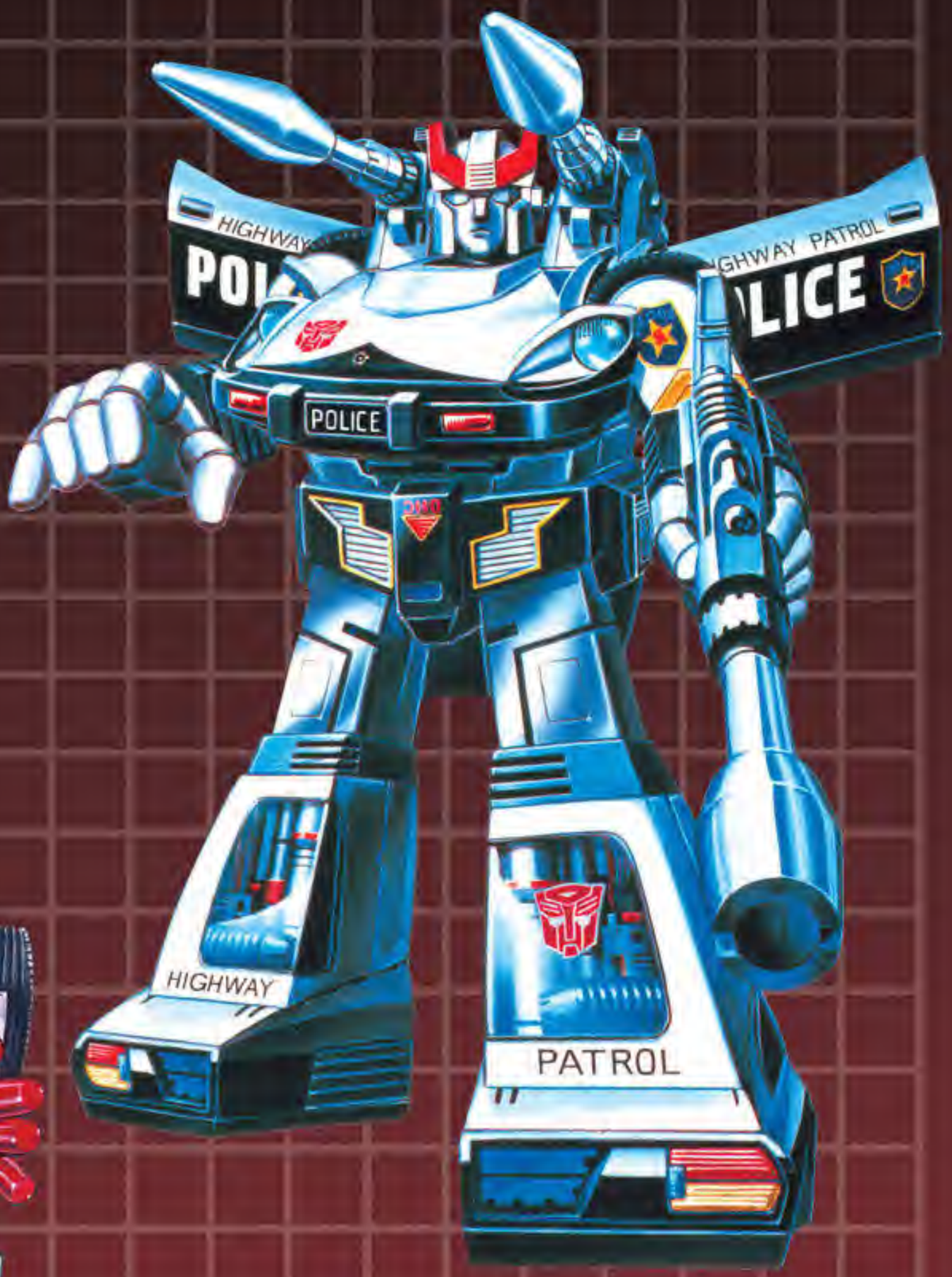
INFERNO

RED ALERT

WHEELJACK



HOUND



PROWL

RATCHET

SKIDS

IRONHIDE

JAZZ

POWERGLIDE

SEASPRAY

COSMOS

WARPATH

BEACHCOMBER

HOIST

TRACKS

SMOKESCREEN

SIDESWIPE

GRAPPLE

SUNSTREAKER

ROADBUSTER

WHIRL

HUBCAP

OUTBACK

TAILGATE

PIPES

SWERVE

SWOOP

SNARL

SLUDGE

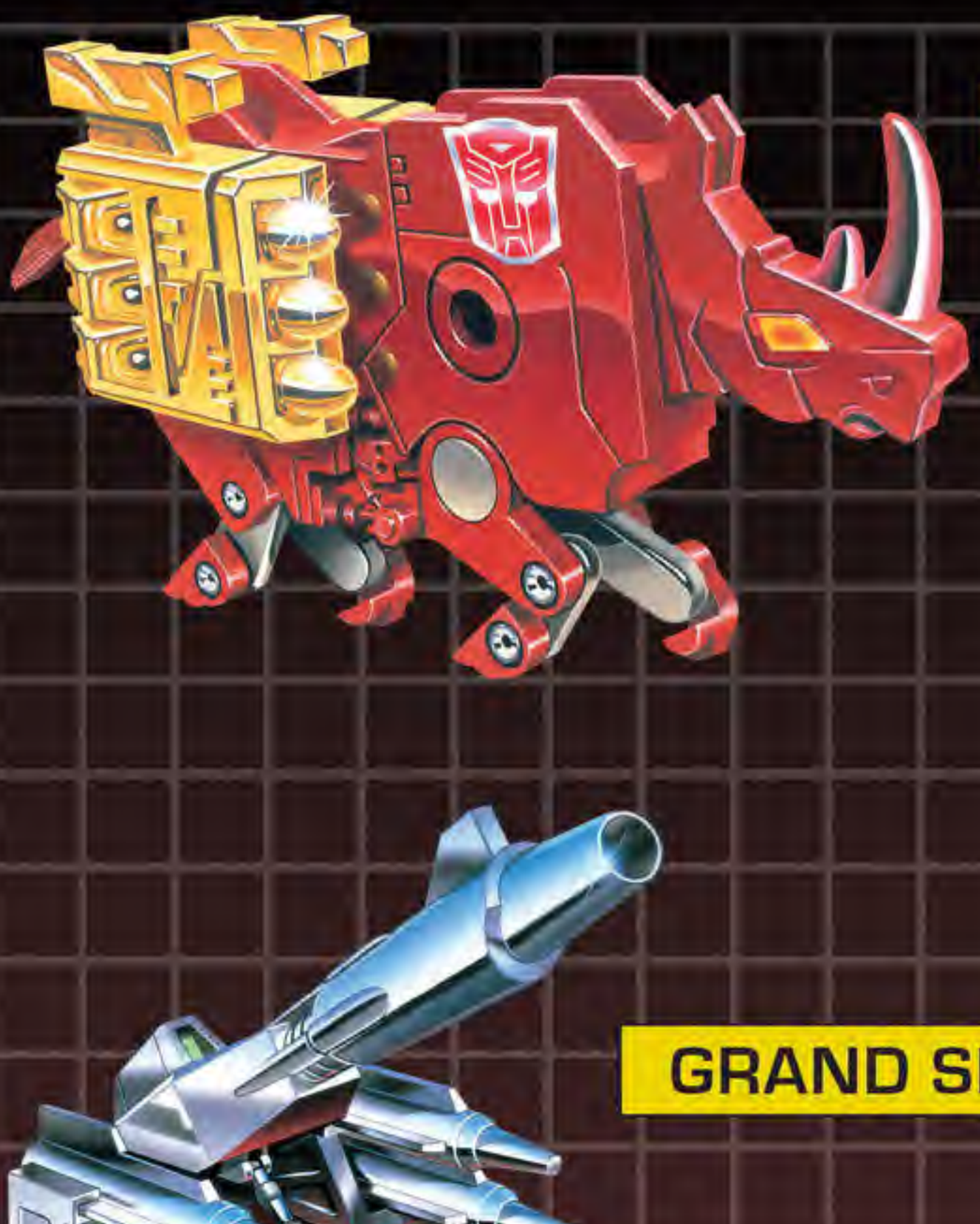
DINOBOTS

GRIMLOCK

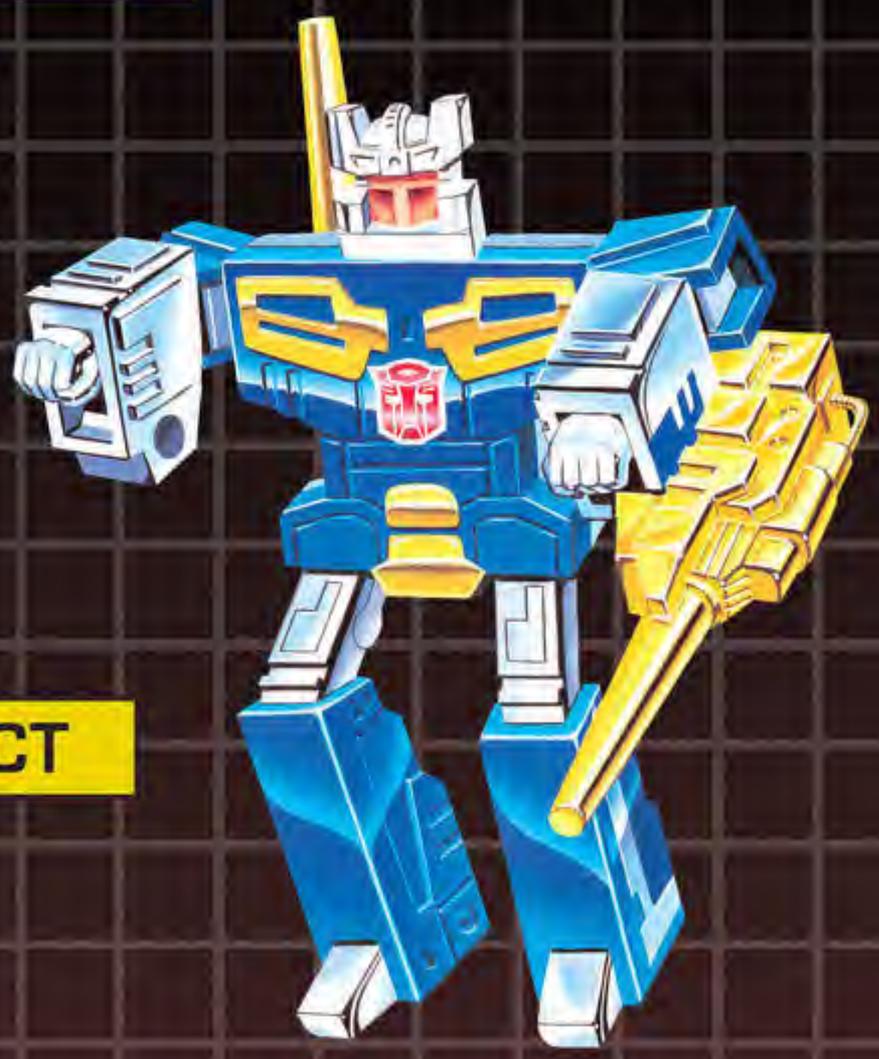
SLAG

BLASTER

SLAMDANCE



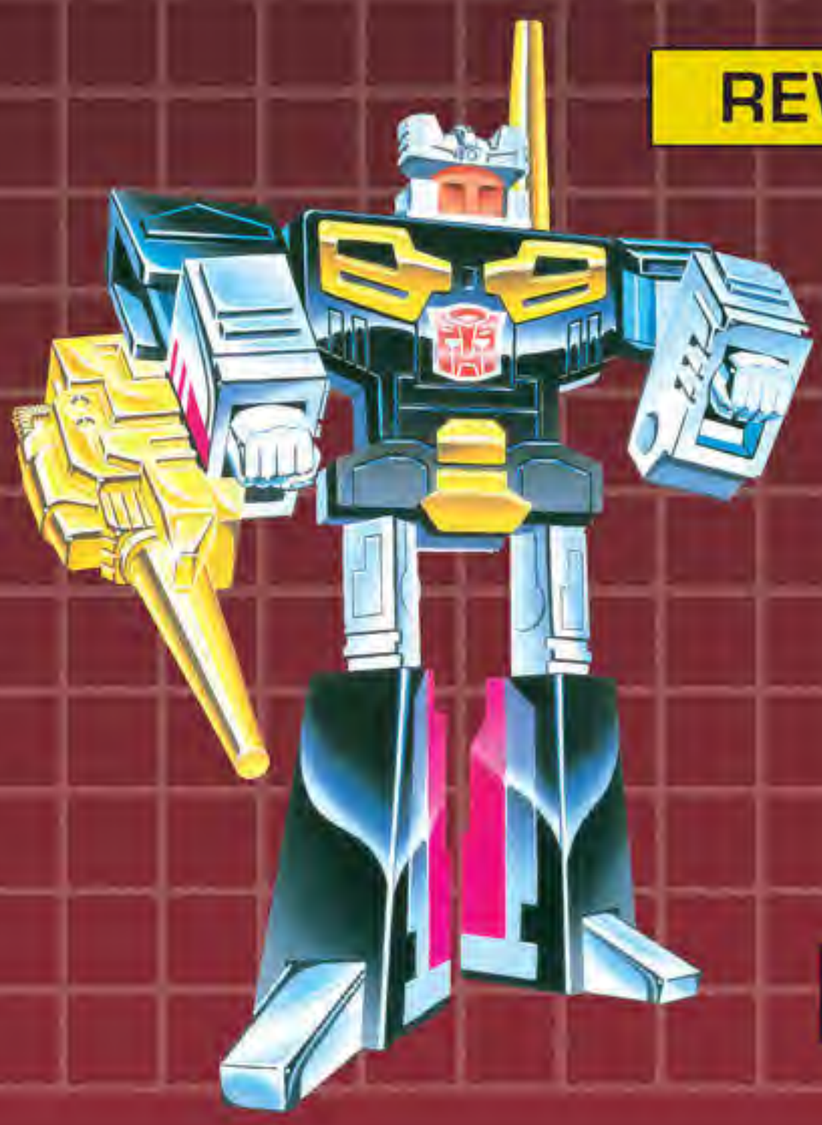
RAMHORN



EJECT

GRAND SLAM

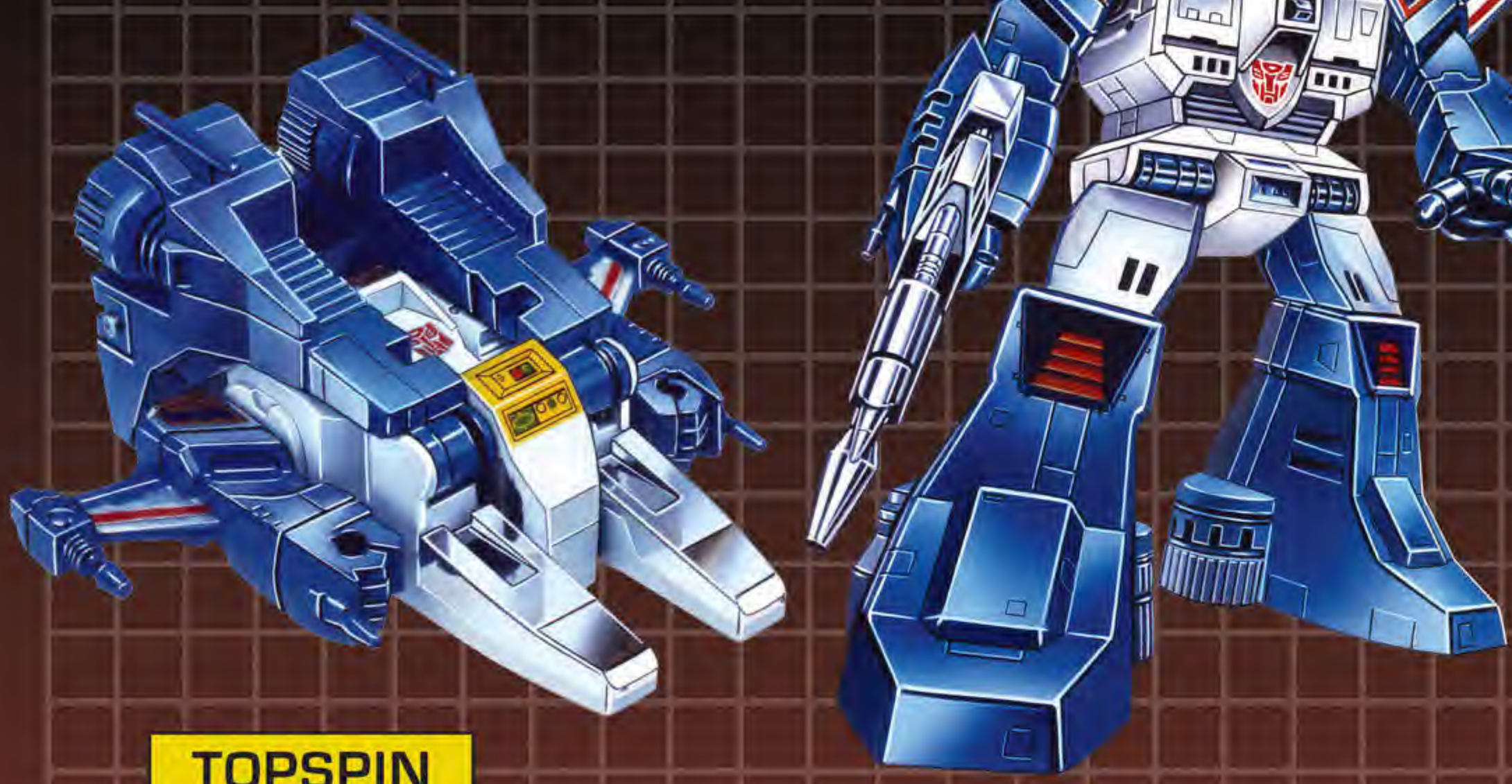
RAINDANCE



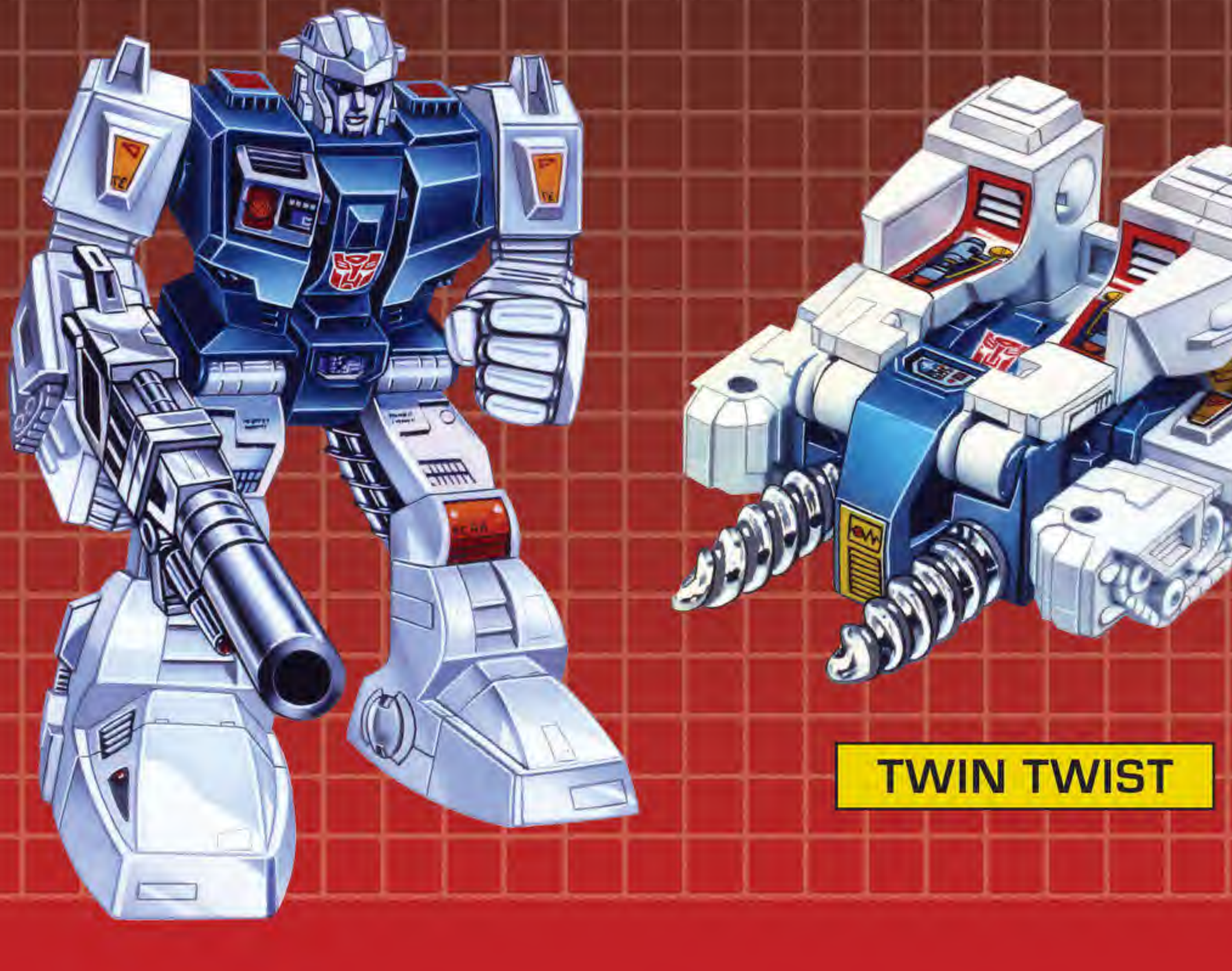
REWIND

STEELJAW

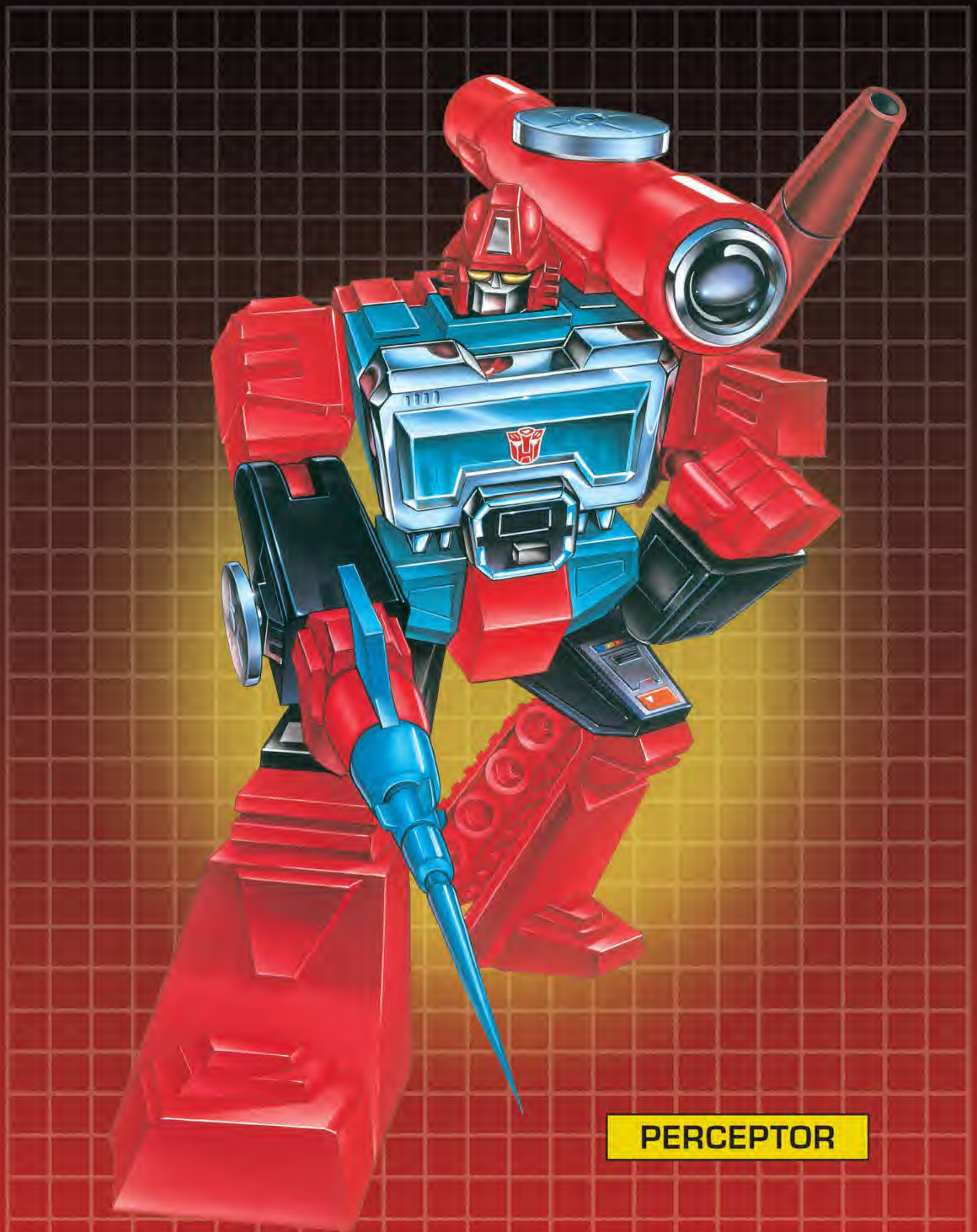
JUMPSTARTERS



TOPSPIN



TWIN TWIST


PERCEPTOR

OMNIBOTS

OVERDRIVE

DOWNSHIFT

CAMSHAFT

The Omnibots had no box art of their own in their U.S. release, as they were only sold as mail order exclusives, for fans who clipped the “Robot Points” from the back of their packages and sent them in. This artwork was created for a toy pack-in catalog.

CLASSICS DECEPTICONS

MEGATRON

STARSCREAM

SKYWARP

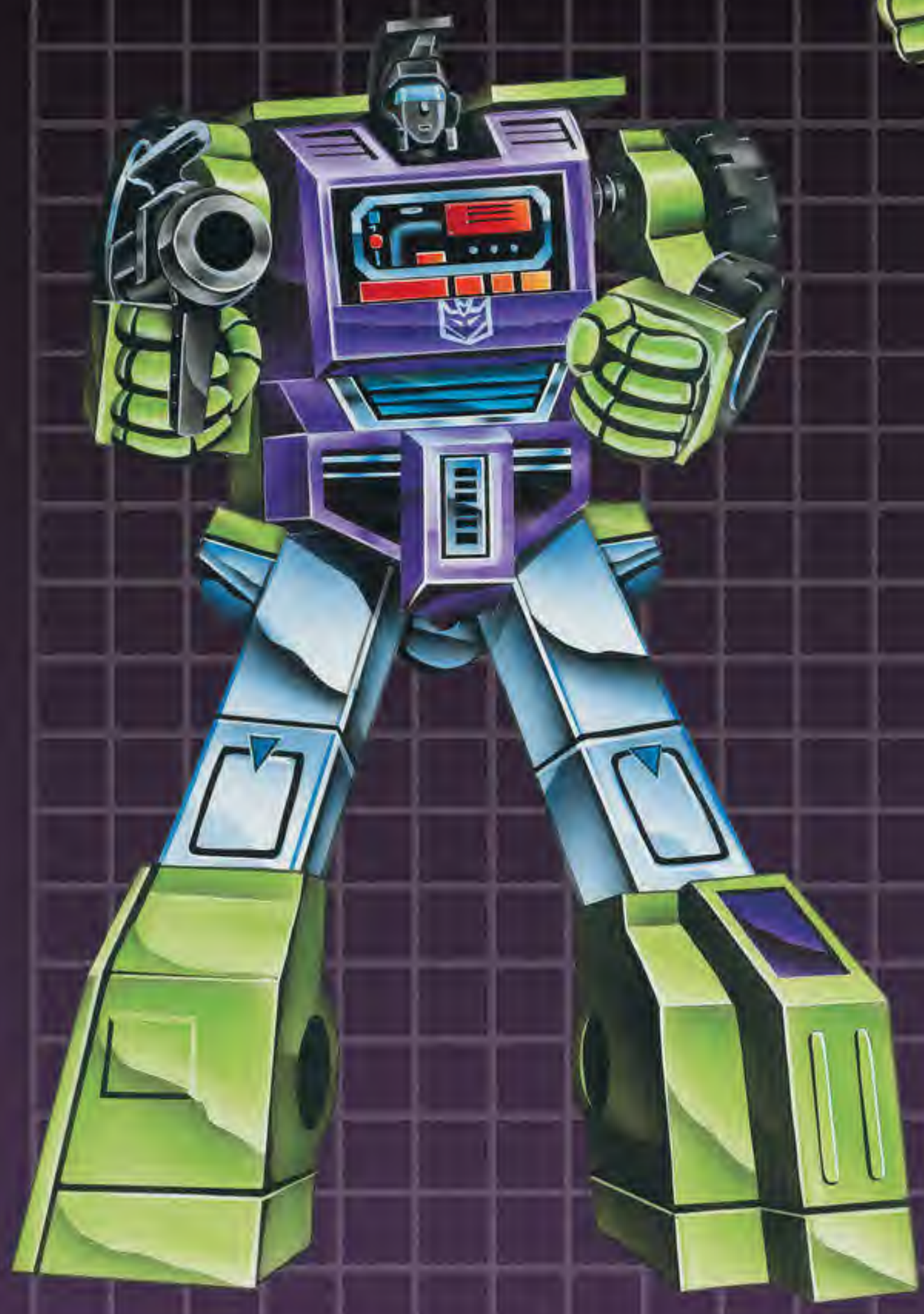
THUNDERCRACKER

DIRGE

THRUST

RAMJET

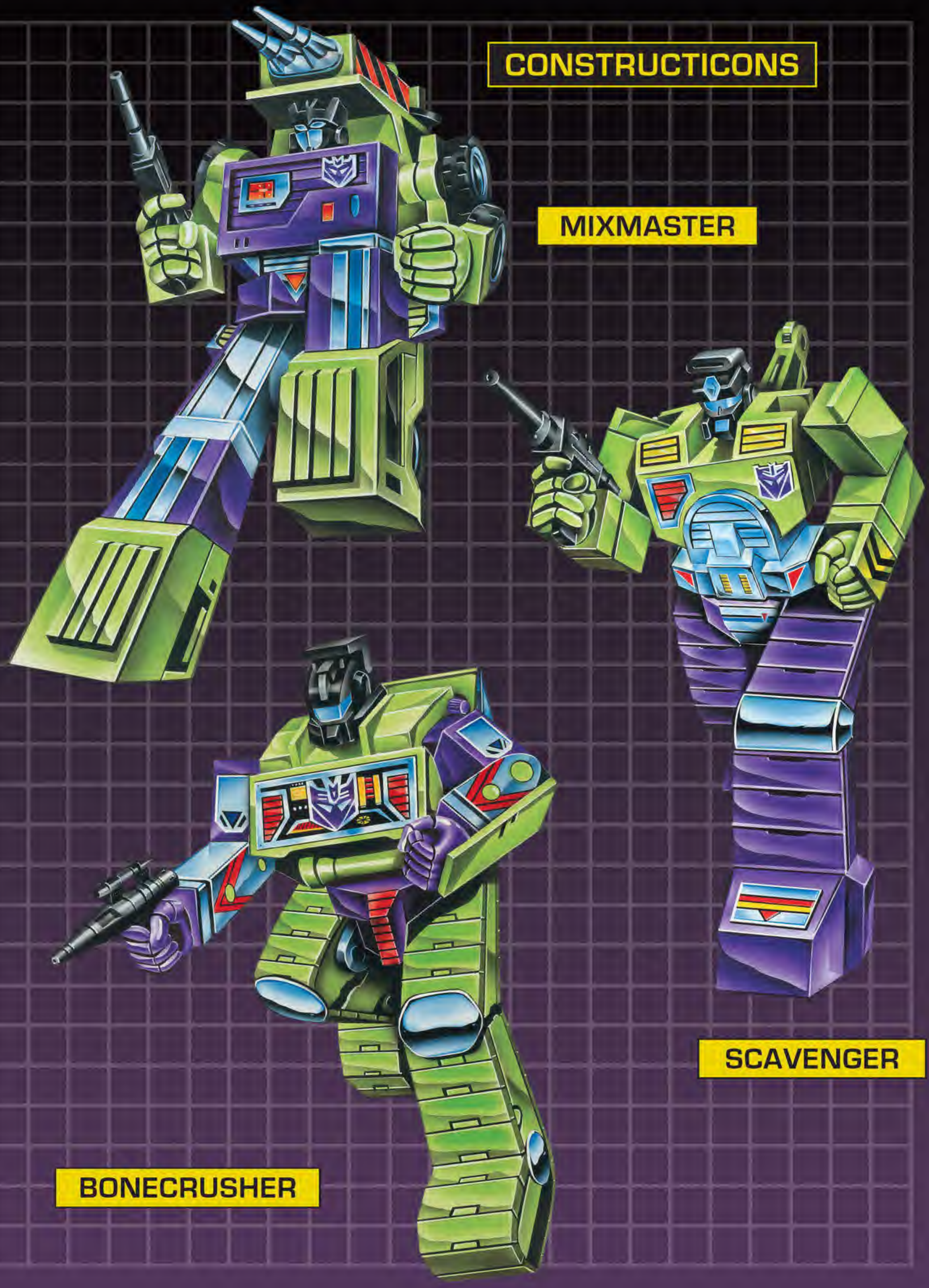
SCRAPPER



HOOK

LONG HAUL

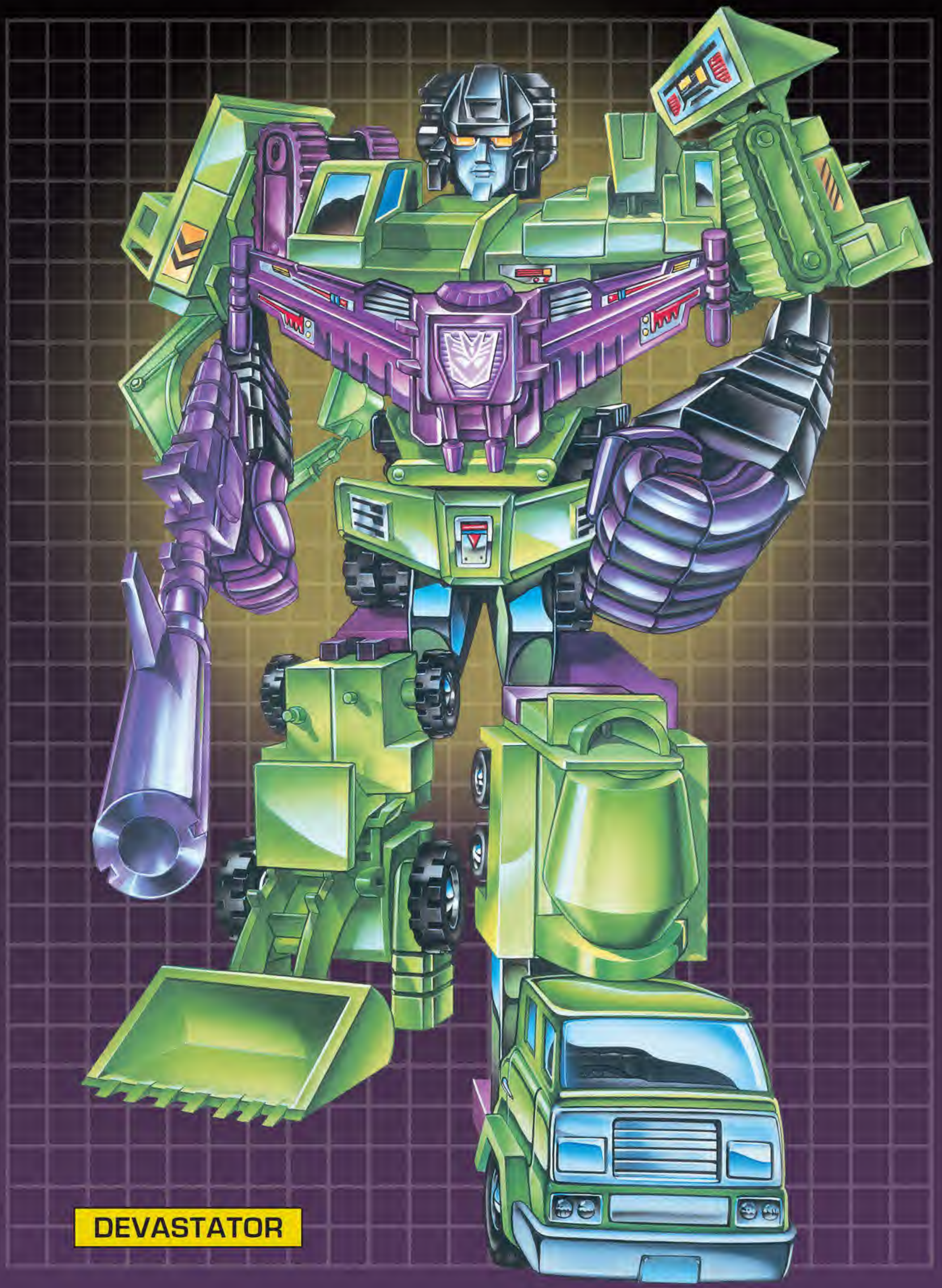
CONSTRUCTICONS



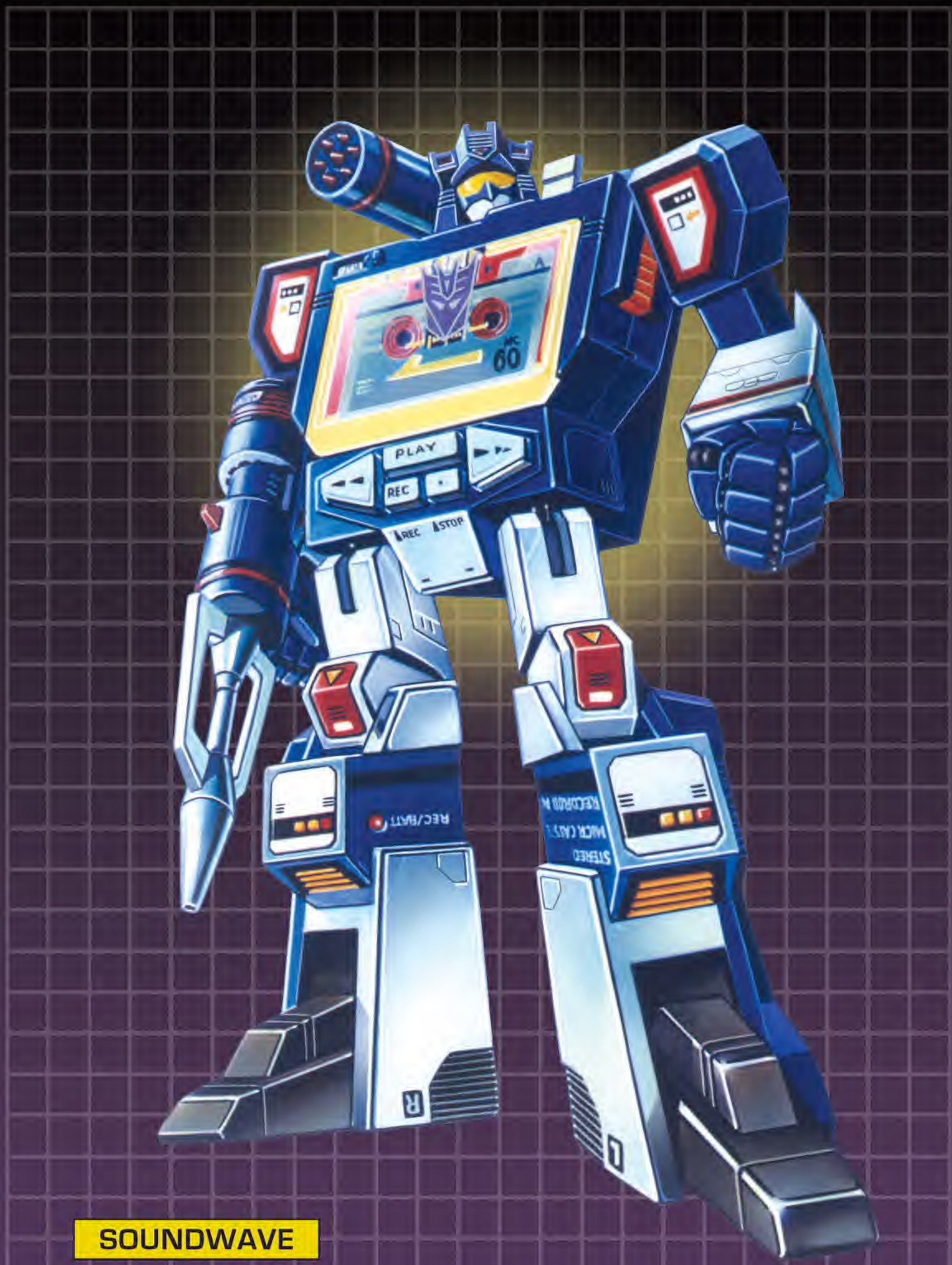
MIXMASTER

BONECRUSHER

SCAVENGER



DEVASTATOR



SOUNDWAVE

RATBAT

LASERBEAK

RAVAGE

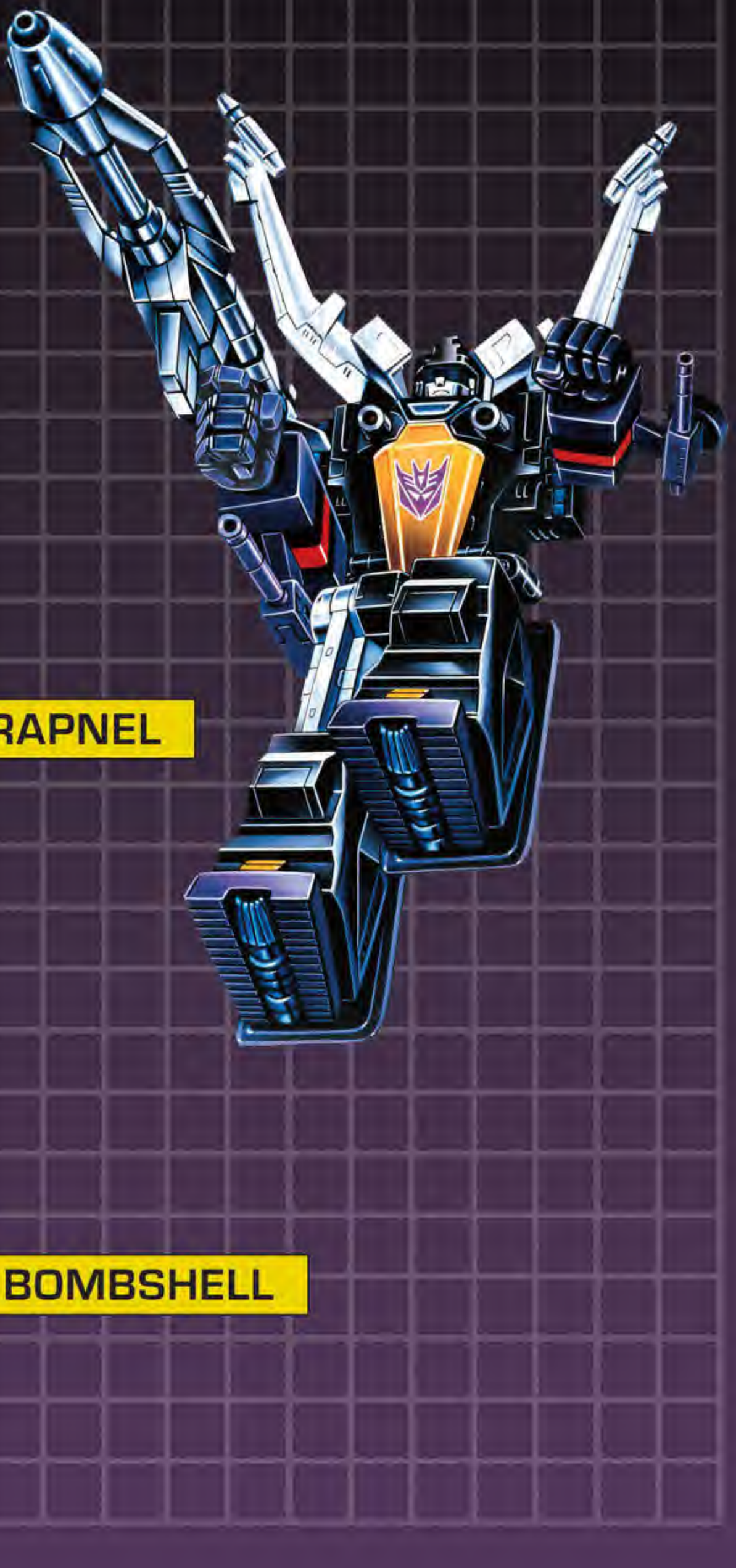
RUMBLE

FRENZY

SQUAWKTALK
BEASTBOX
SQUAWKBOX
SLUGFEST
OVERKILL

INSECTICONS

KICKBACK



SHRAPNEL

BOMBSHELL

BARRAGE

VENOM

CHOP SHOP

RANSACK

BLITZWING

OCTANE

ASTROTRAIN

JAPANESE VERSION

1986 JAPANESE PACKAGE BACK

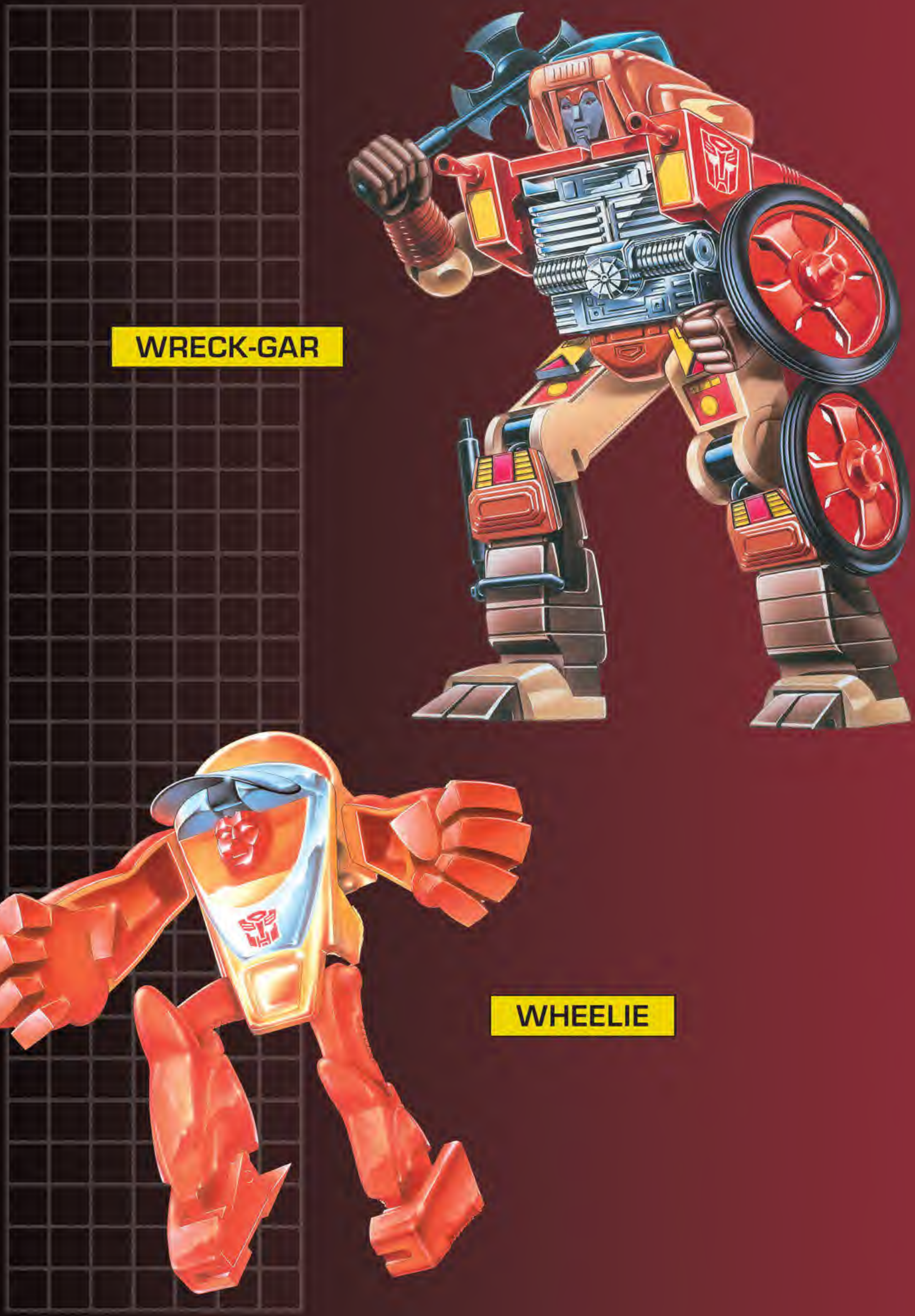
FINAL VERSION

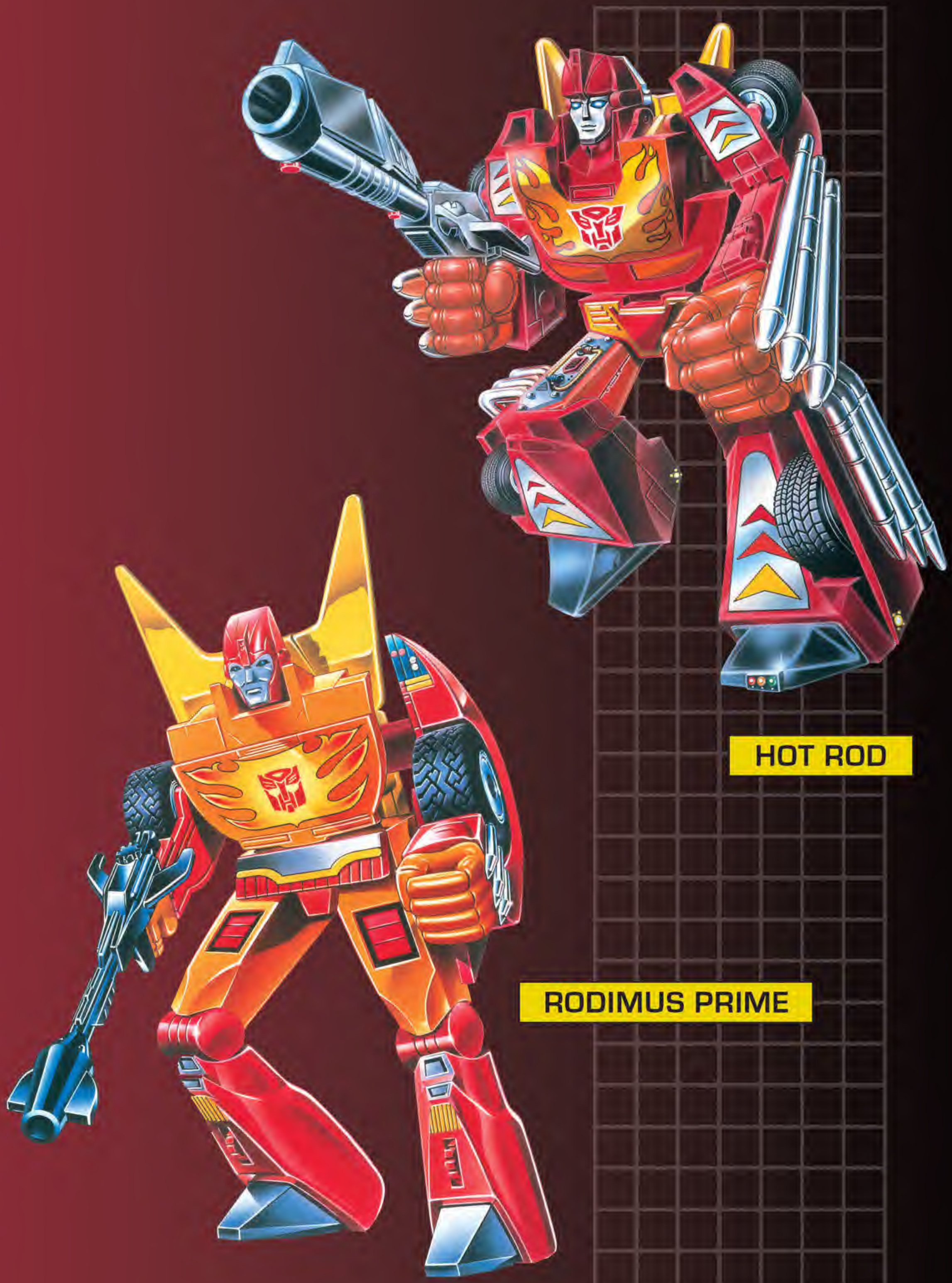
EARLY TRYPTICON DRAFT

MOVIE ERA AUTOBOTS

ULTRA MAGNUS

"It is the year 2005." In 1986, The Transformers exploded onto the big screen and into the future with new gimmicks and science-fiction-inspired transformations. Sub-teams proliferated; most new characters introduced had some affiliation beyond just being Autobots or Decepticons.


WRECK-GAR
WHEELIE

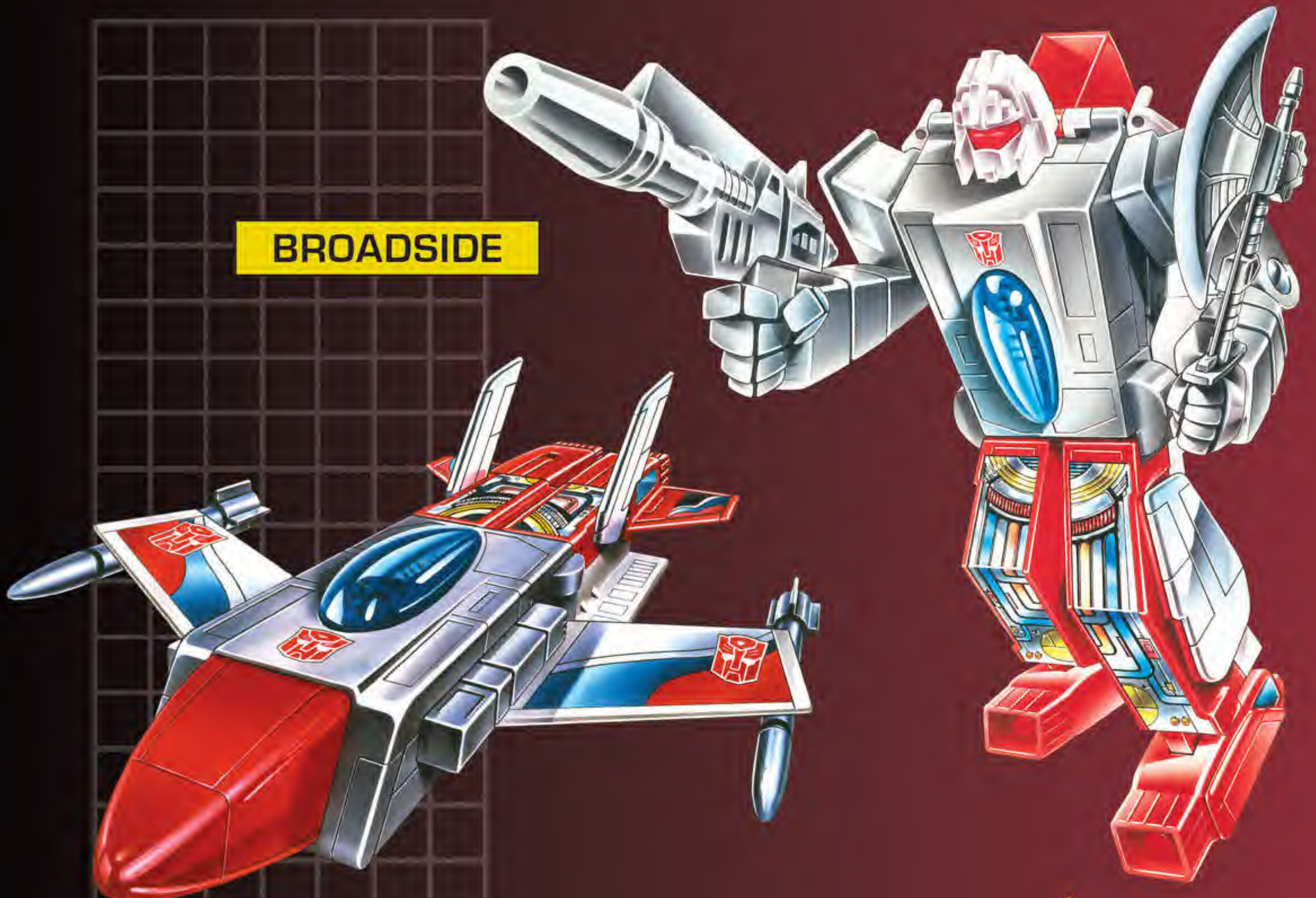

HOT ROD
RODIMUS PRIME

PUNCH/COUNTERPUNCH

KUP

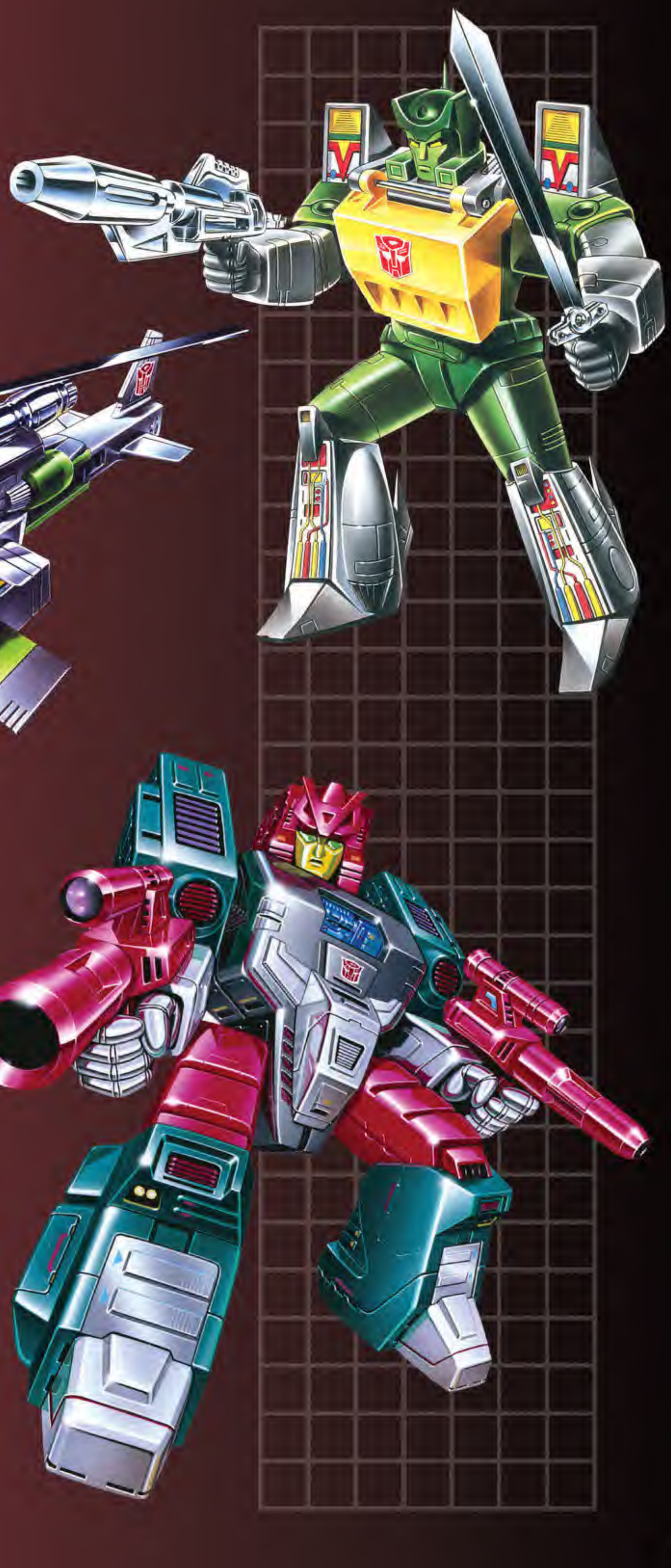
BLURR

BROADSIDE



SANDSTORM

SPRINGER



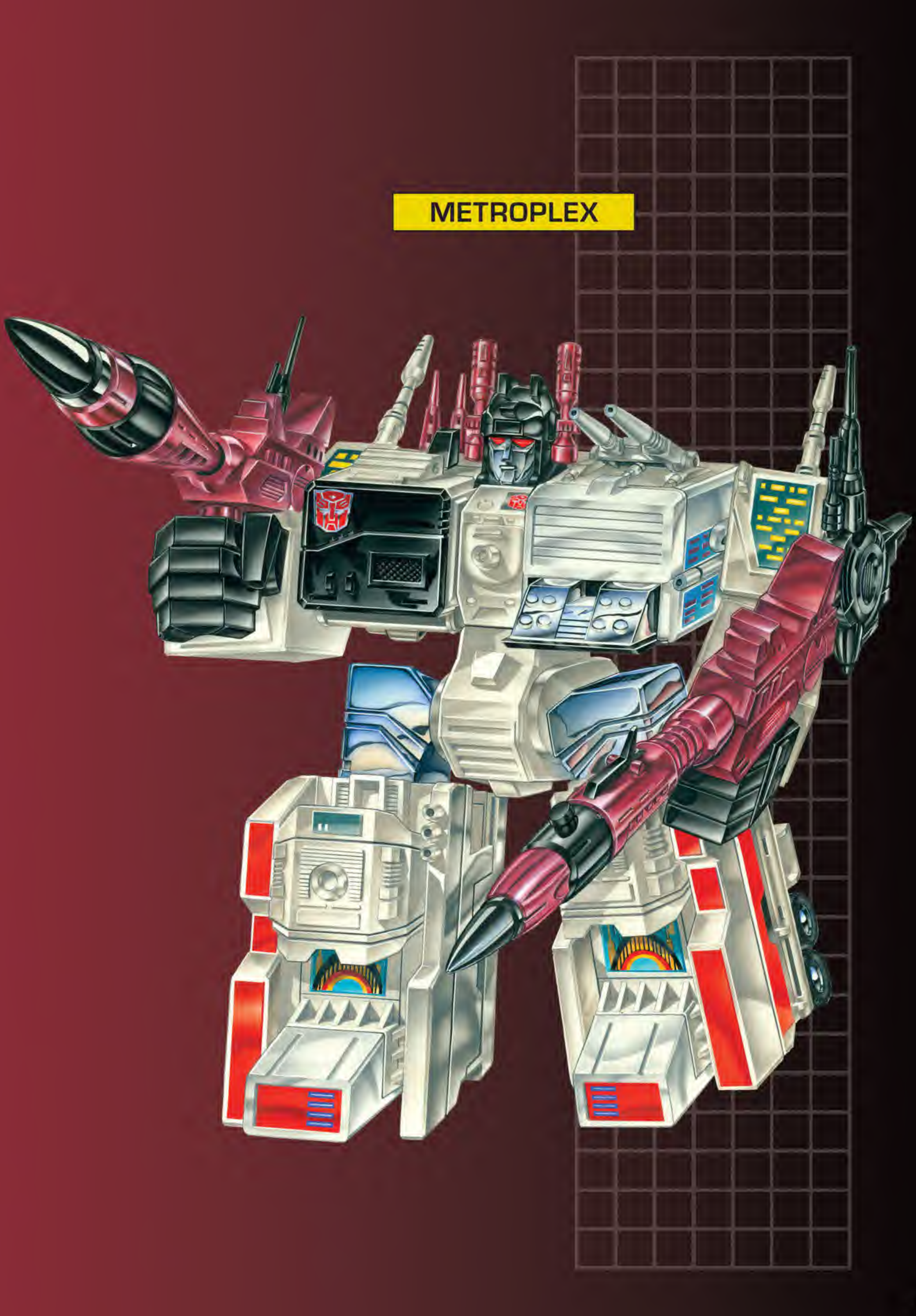
QUICKSWITCH

CLONES

FASTLANE

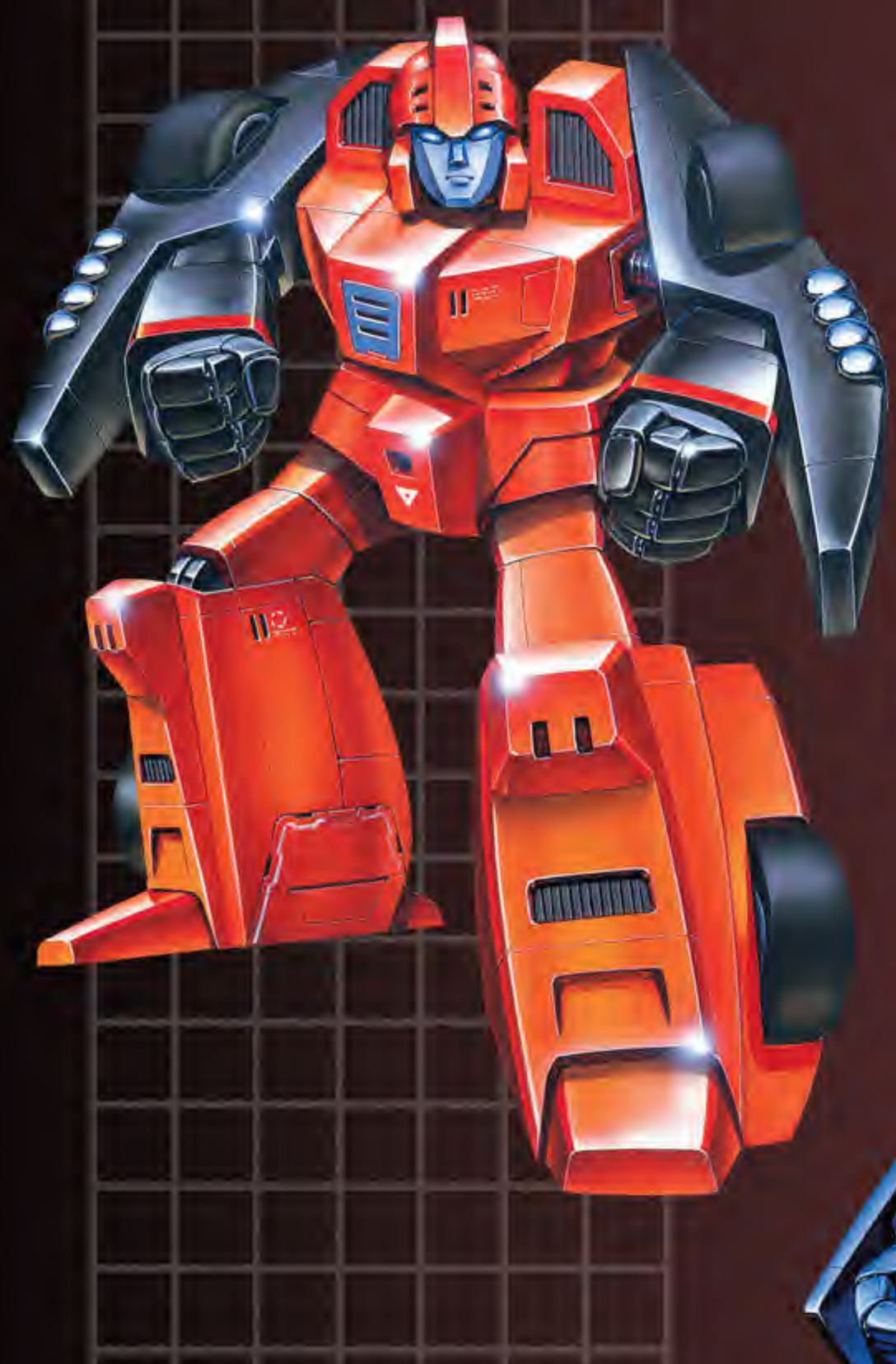
CLOUDRAKER

METROPLEX



SPARKABOTS

GUZZLE



SIZZLE

FIZZLE

MONSTERBOTS

GROTUSQUE

REPUGNUS

DOUBLECROSS

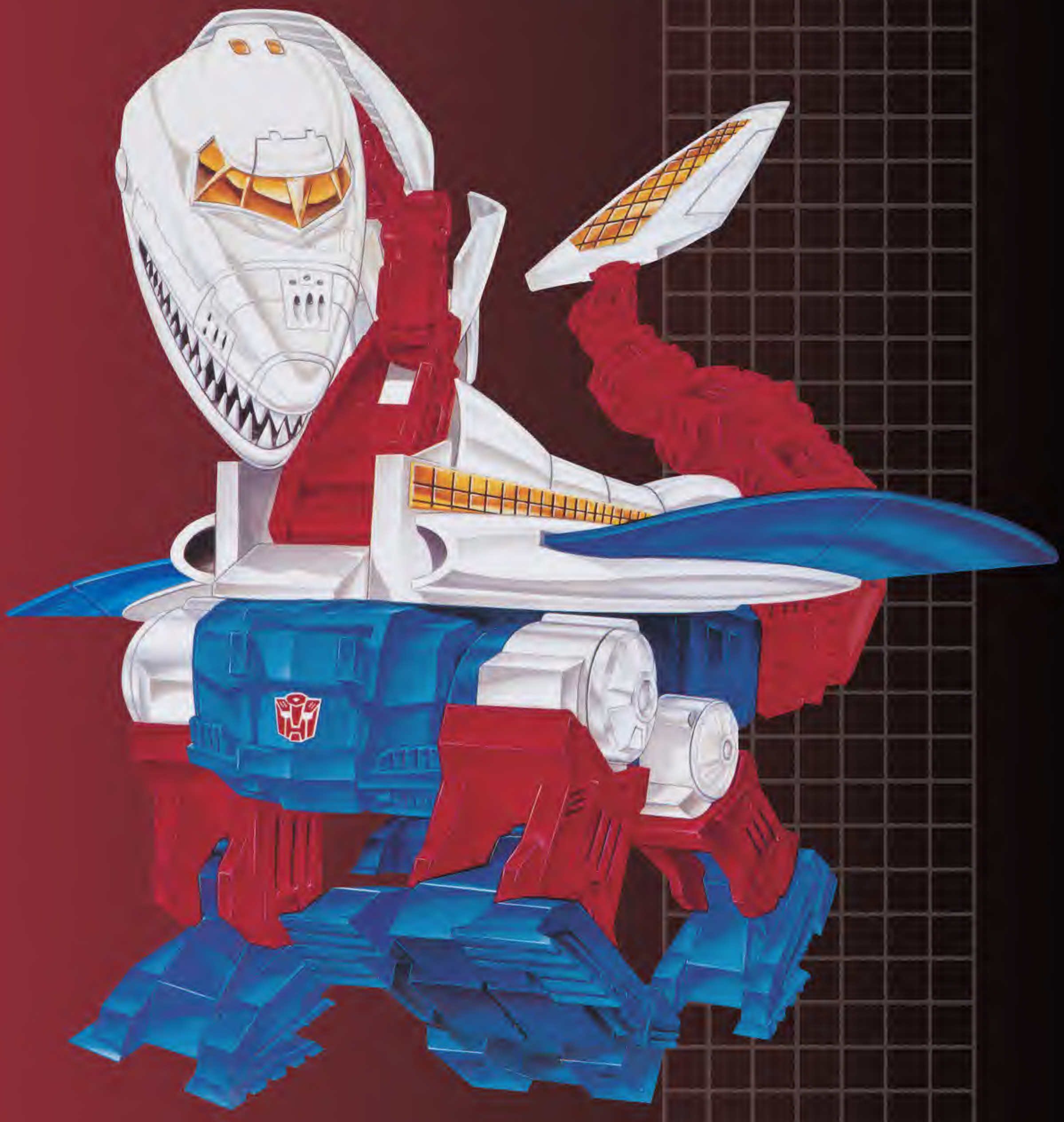
TRIGGERBOTS

DOGFIGHT

OVERRIDE

BACKSTREET

SKY LYNX



THROTTLEBOTS

GOLDBUG

CHASE

SEARCHLIGHT

ROLLBAR

WIDELOAD

FREEWAY

GALVATRON

CYCLONUS

SCOURGE

MOVIE ERA DECEPTICONS

TRYPTICON

JAPANESE VERSION

SIXSHOT

RUNAMUCK

RUNABOUT

RAMPAGE
DIVEBOMB
TANTRUM
RAZORCLAW
HEADSTRONG

PREDACONS

PREDAKING

TRIGGERCONS

WINDSWEEPER

RUCKUS

CRANKCASE

BATTLETRAP

FLYWHEELS

GNAW

CLONES

POUNCE

WINGSPAN

FIRECONS

SPARKSTALKER

CINDERSAUR

FLAMEFEATHER

Part Two: More than Meets the Eye

While the artistic style of The Transformers was remarkably consistent for the first twelve years of the brand, it would not be accurate to say that the packages stagnated; far from it. While the basic form of a glossy, airbrushed robot in a perspective-defying pose would remain an identifying element of the brand through 1995, the backgrounds on which they were set varied substantially. The red-and-purple fading grids of 1984-1986 gave way to grids with a bolder explosion of color by 1987. As the brand became increasingly dominated by sublines in the late '80s, so too did the packaging diverge. Micromasters, Pretenders, and Action Masters packaging each had a different feel to them. By now, you've no doubt noticed that the backgrounds of each chapter are different. They change to reflect the underlying packaging aesthetic of the era each chapter represents.

The aforementioned dominance of sublines is the subject of Part Two of this book. Beginning in late 1985 with the advent of the special teams, Transformers gradually transitioned from a line with numerous divergent teams (such as the Dinobots and the Constructicons) to a line where most toys could be pigeonholed by their gimmick. In early years, there was a sharp divide between the Autobot and the Decepticon teams. By the end, this was no longer the case. Instead, there were good guy and bad guy Micromasters, Headmasters, Pretenders, and the like.

Chapter Three covers Scramble City, the Japanese name for the special teams of interchangeable combiners. These seven groups bulked up the 1986 through 1988 product lines. Though in theory each smaller toy could form an arm or leg on any team, in practice this ability was not showcased in any U.S. fiction. (In Japan the concept was explored.) The odd team out is the Seacons. They were the only team to not have a rival on the opposite side. Additionally, each of the smaller Seacon toys could become either a limb or a weapon, and thus the toy was billed as a Targetmaster. Which brings us neatly to...

Chapter Four, the Nebulan Era. Head-, Target-, and Powermasters dominated much of the product line in 1987 and 1988. The conceit was that the Transformers from Cybertron partnered with the inhabitants of Nebulos to bolster their abilities. Their small partners could become the heads, guns, or engines of robots, and unlock features of the toys as they did so. Once again, parts could be swapped, specifically the heads of the Headmasters; once again, this concept went largely unexplored in the U.S. but did get some traction in Japan.

The Pretenders are the subject of Chapter Five. Transformers could now disguise themselves beyond a simple conversion to an alternate mode; now they could encase themselves in a living suit of armor. In the two years Pretenders were sold, 1988 and 1989, the concept got more and more elaborate, to the point where a vehicle could disgorge a shell that could convert to an alternate mode containing a small robot. The artwork from this period attempts to demonstrate these features, resulting in a single character having as many as five distinct modes illustrated, as seen on page 116.

Feeling the pressure from Galoob's Micro Machines, Hasbro introduced the Micromasters as about half of the 1989 product line. These tiny but fully functional Transformers had downsized to conserve fuel, or so the story went. For the first time, Transformers had associated vehicles and playsets for them to interact with, a practice that had served Hasbro well with their flagship G.I. Joe line. Micromasters continued through 1990, with the introduction of Combiners, two robots sharing a single alternate mode.

Action Master Inferno MOC (Mint On Card)

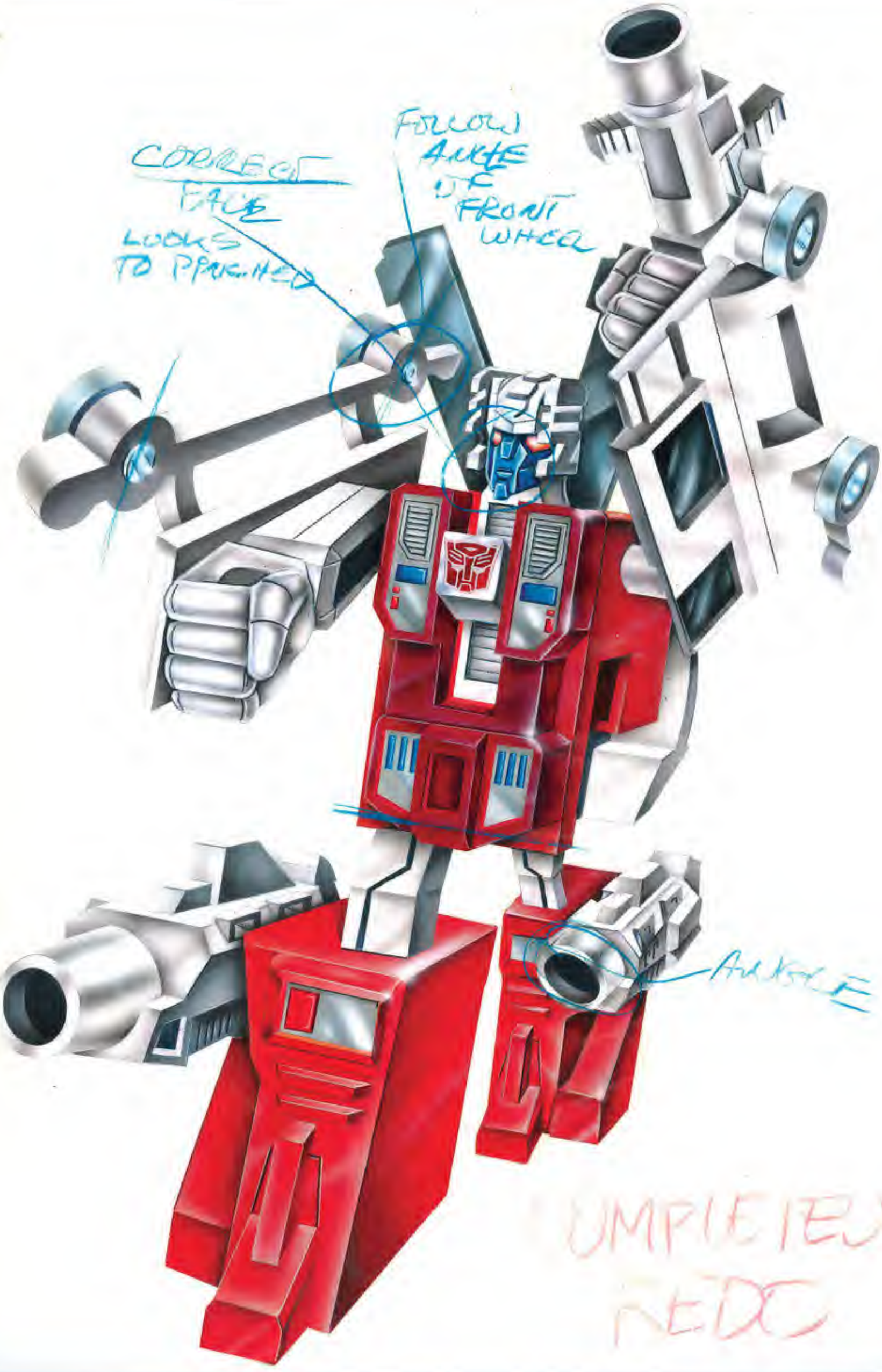
Pretender Proof-of-Concept Illustration

Early Action Masters Packaging Mock-Up

Generation 1 comes to a close in Chapter Seven, the Action Masters. In response to shrinking sales, Hasbro sought to cut costs by transferring the core feature of the line, the ability to convert, from the figures to their accessories. Like Micromasters, Action Masters featured vehicles that could convert to bases. For the first (but definitely not the last) time, the majority of the line was made up of classic characters in new bodies, showing that Hasbro was starting to recognize the value of the characters they had created. Alas, it wasn't enough, and Transformers left U.S. shelves for a few years after the 1990 product line ran its course. Our seventh chapter is the first in the book to feature serious omissions, perhaps because of a lack of enthusiasm for the line among the current adult collectors, who supplied much of the content of this volume.

Powermaster Optimus Prime MISB (Mint In Sealed Box)

1986 JAPANESE SCRAMBLE CITY IN-STORE DISPLAY ARTWORK



Early Draft of Blades Artwork

SCRAMBLE CITY AUTOBOTS

DEFENSOR

COMPUTRON

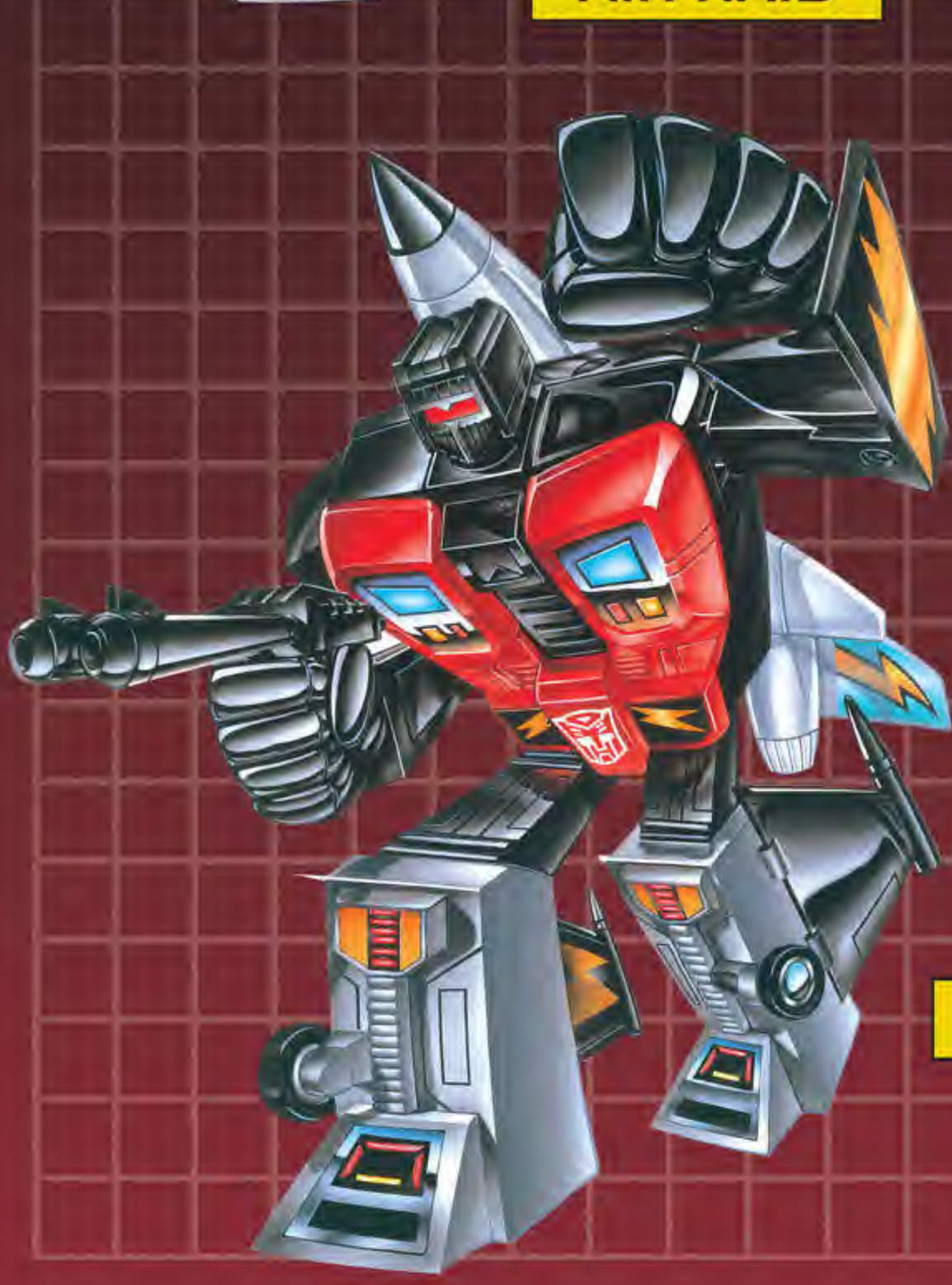
Seven special teams were released during the 1986-1988 toy lines, featuring characters with modular combination abilities.

JAPANESE VERSIONS

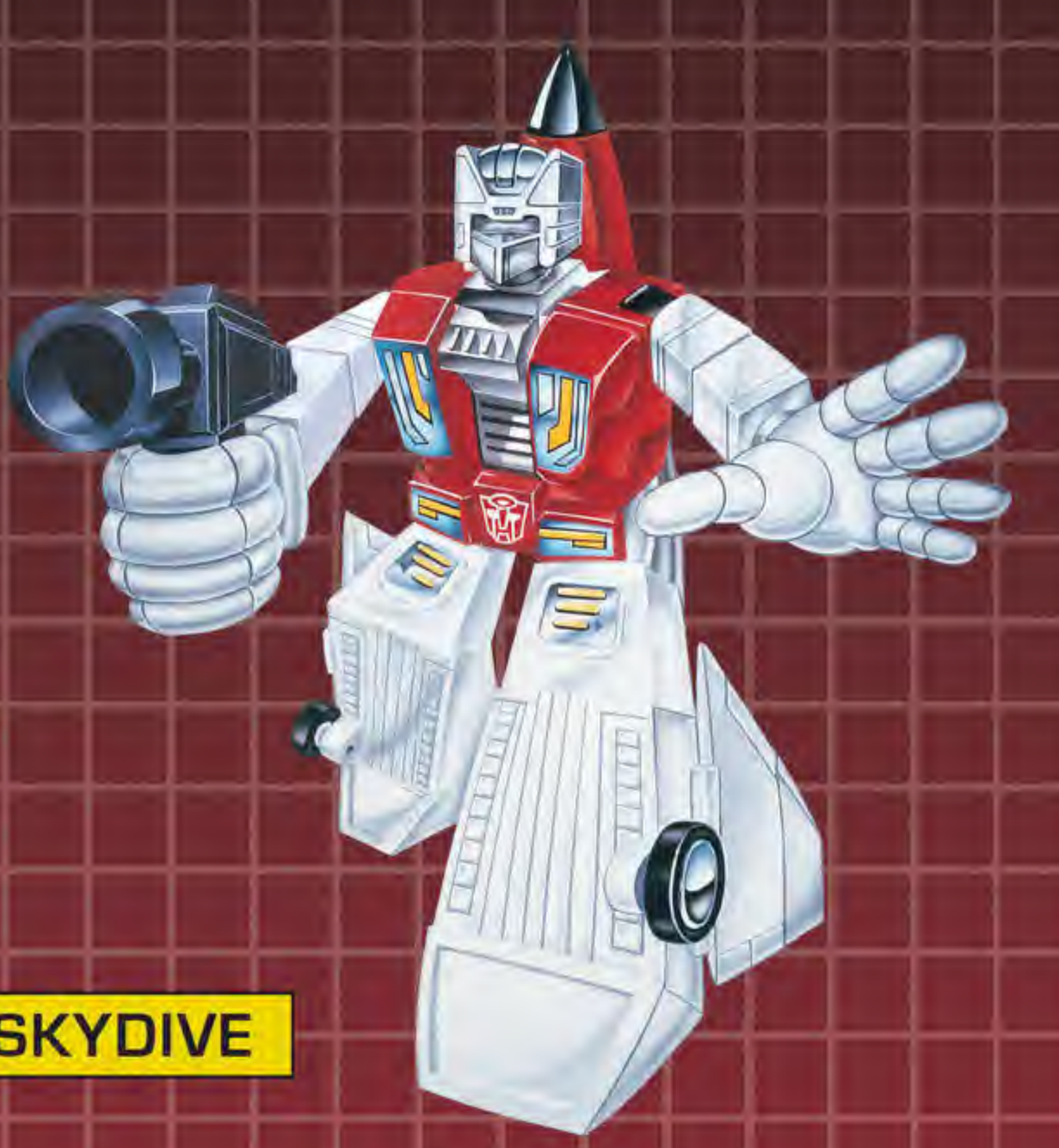
AERIALBOTS

AIR RAID

SLINGSHOT



SKYDIVE



FIREFLIGHT

SILVERBOLT

SUPERION

FIRST AID

GROOVE

STREETWISE

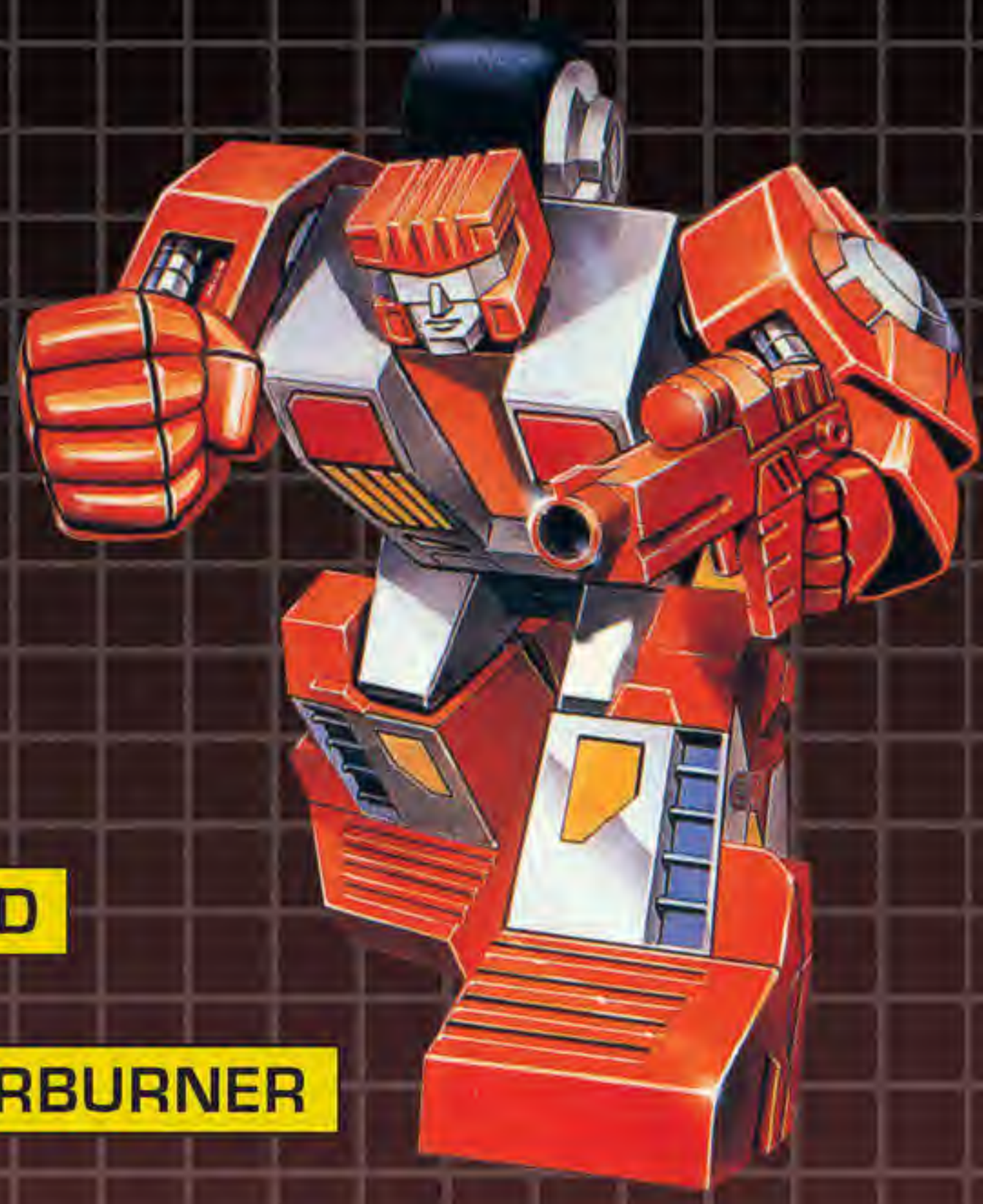
BLADES

HOT SPOT

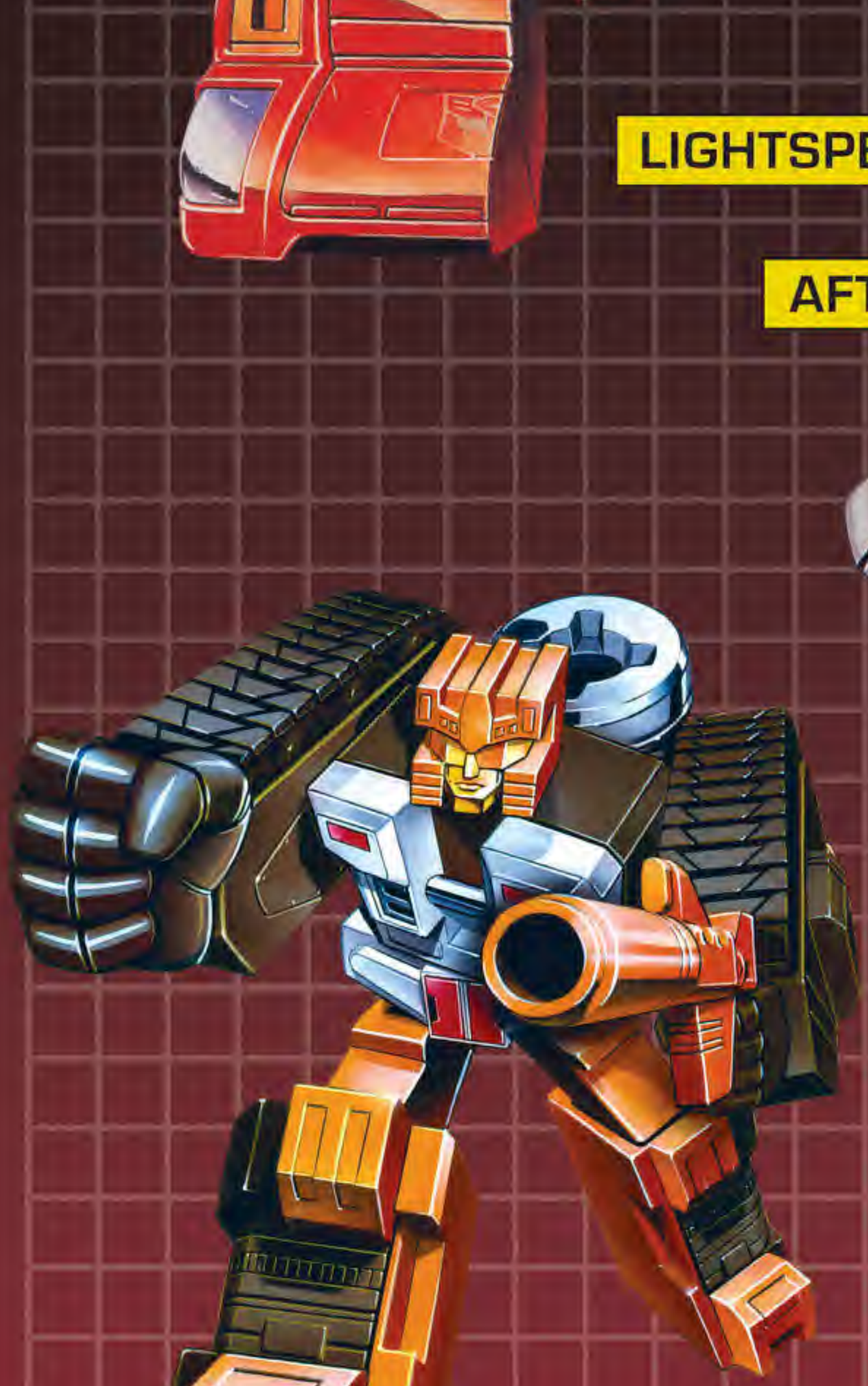
DEFENSOR

PROTECTOBOTS

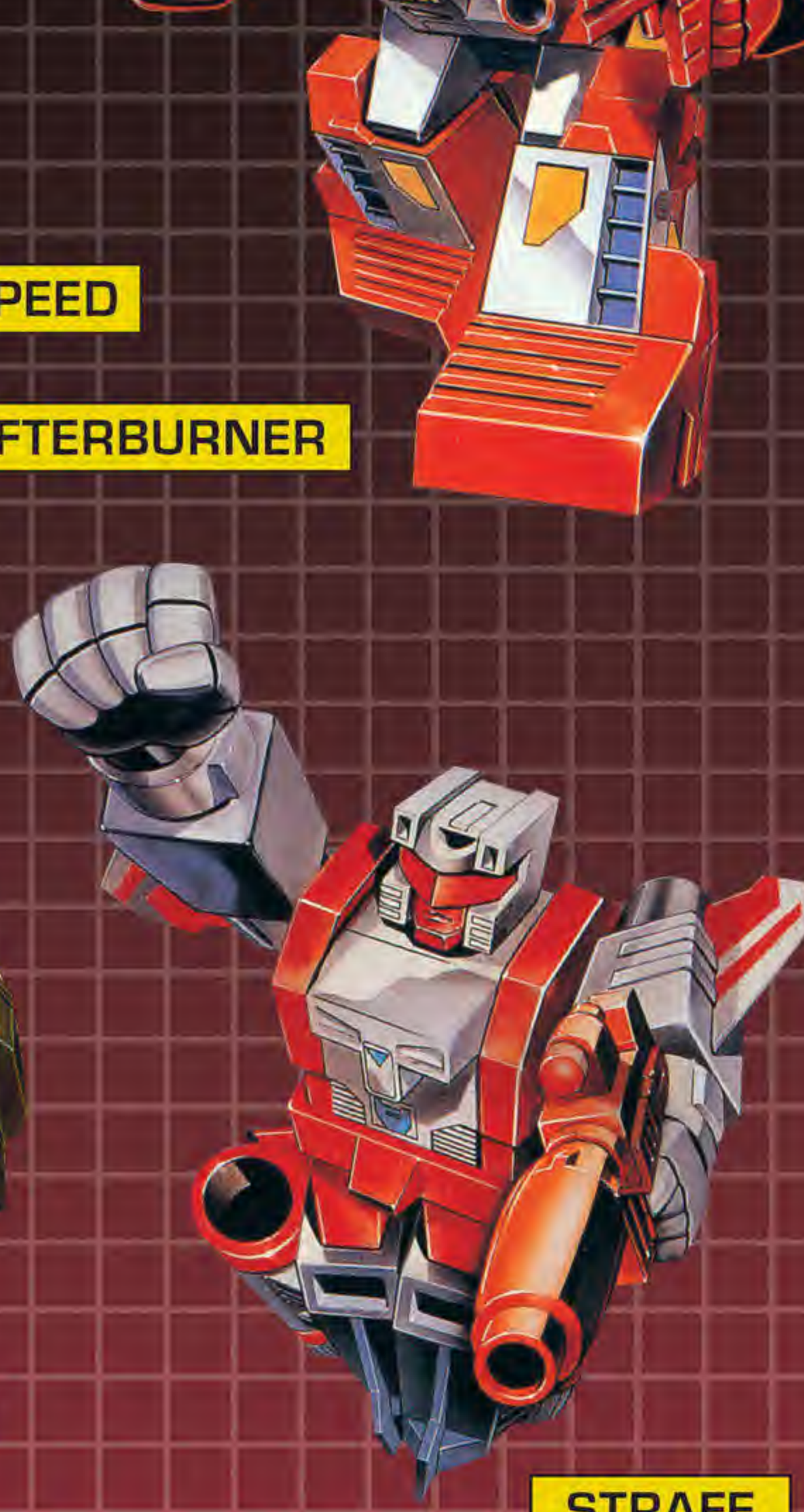
LIGHTSPEED



AFTERBURNER



NOSECONE

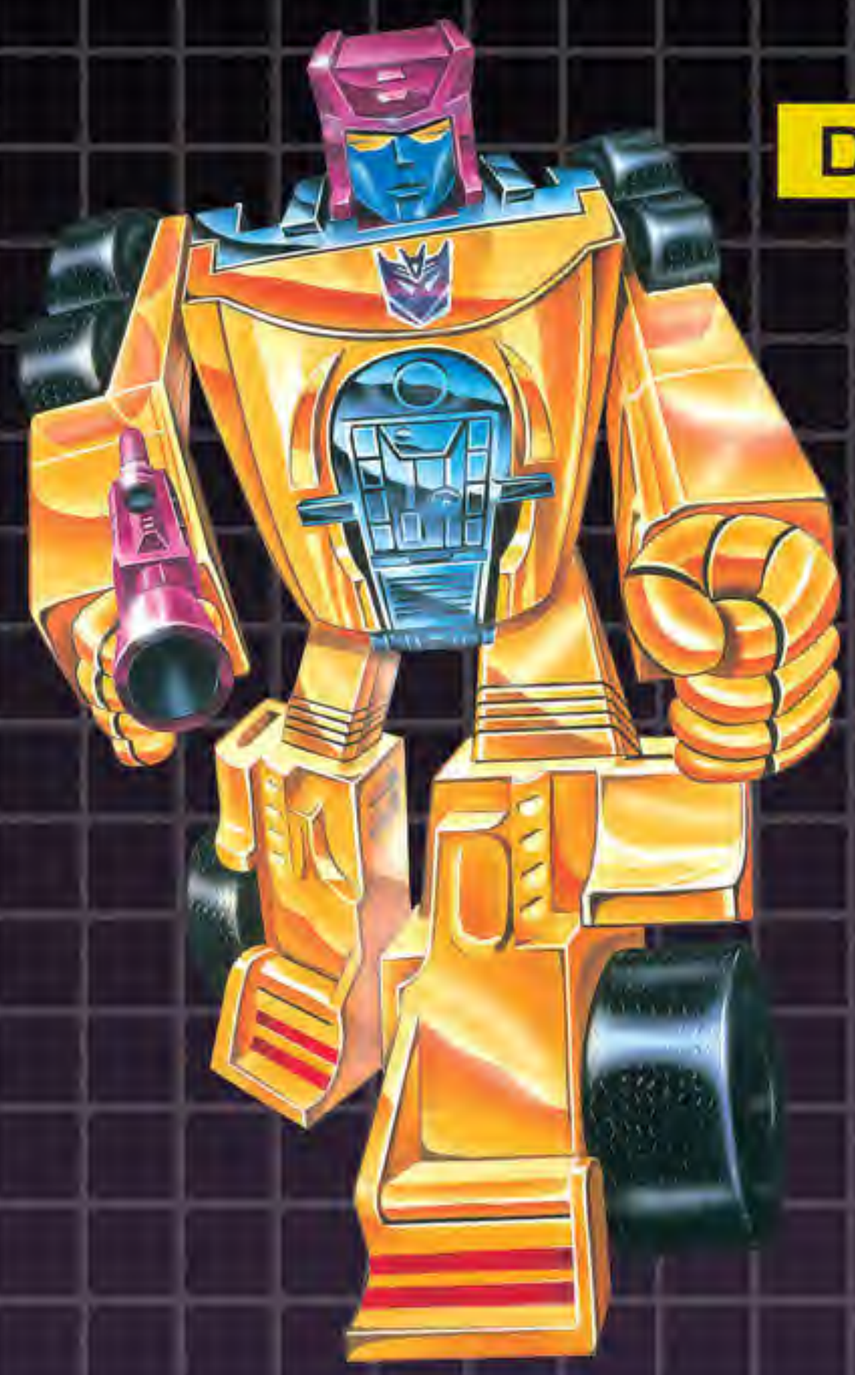


STRAFE

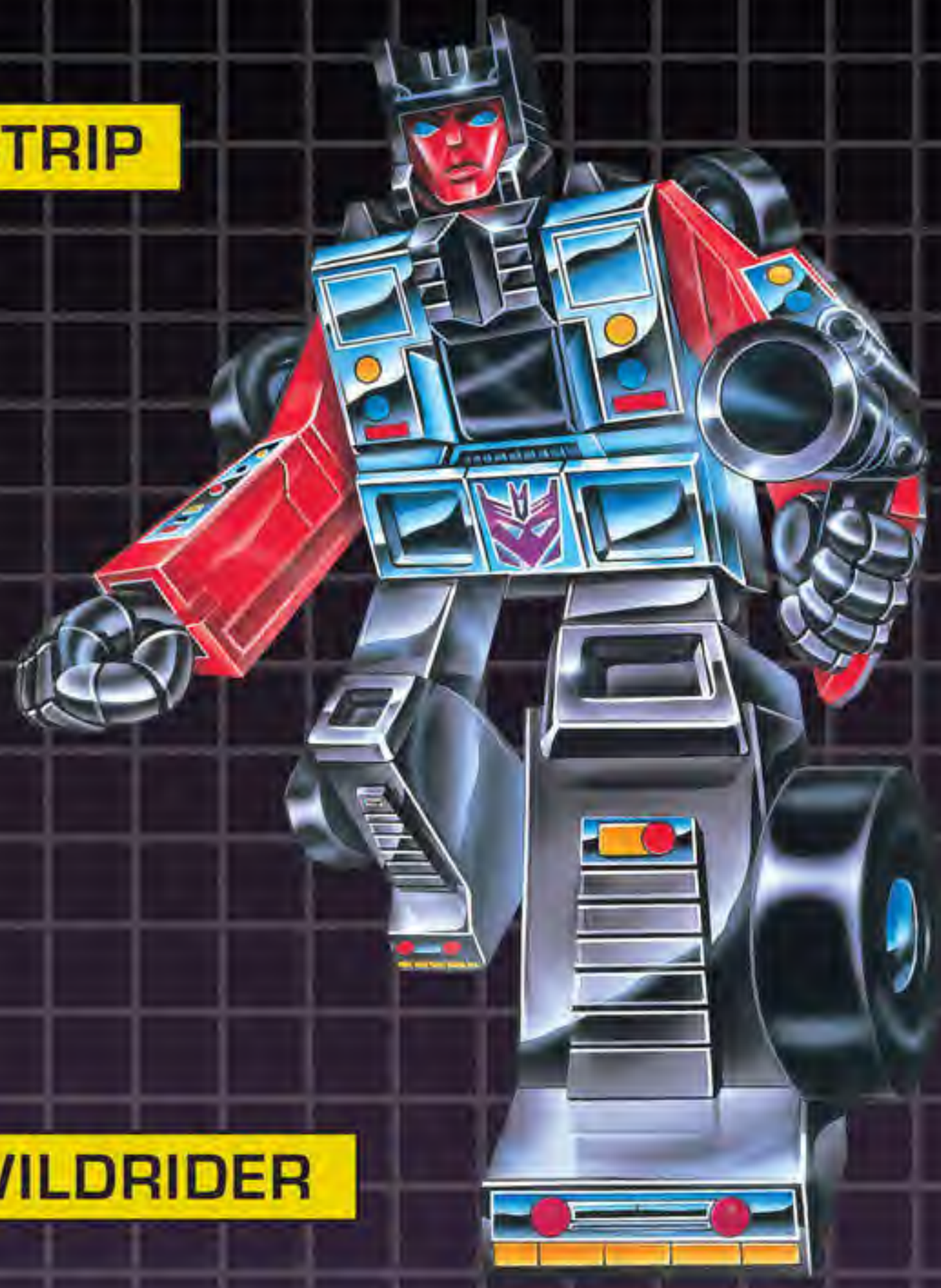
TECHNOBOTS

SCATTERSHOT

COMPUTRON

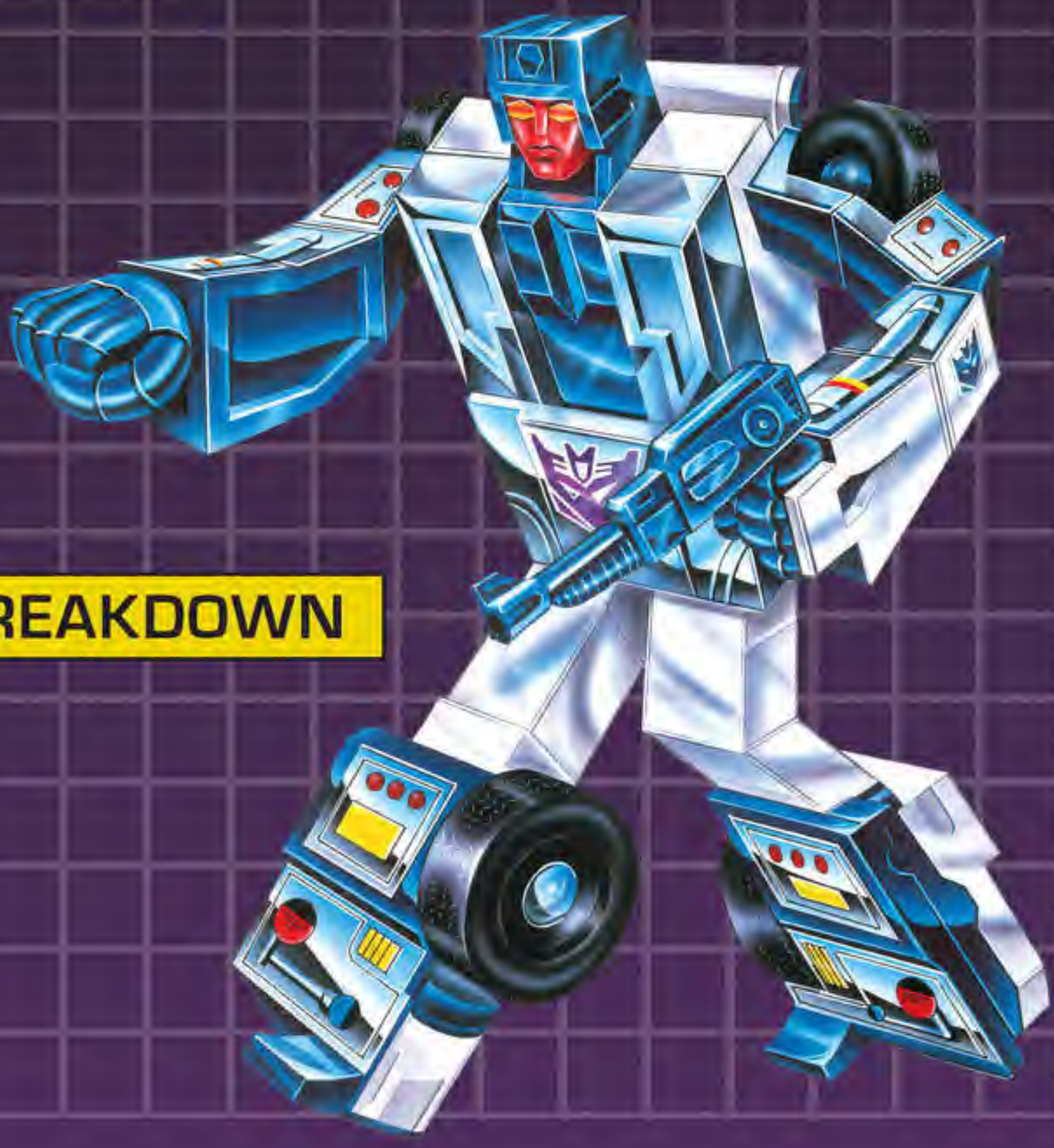


DRAG STRIP



WILDRIDER

DEAD END



BREAKDOWN

SCRAMBLE CITY DECEPTICONS

MENASOR

MOTORMASTER

STUNTICONS

BRAWL

VORTEX

BLAST OFF

SWINDLE

BRUTICUS

ONSLAUGHT

COMBATICONS

BLOT

RIPPERSNAPPER

SINNERTWIN

CUTTHROAT

ABOMINUS

HUN-GURRR

TERRORCONS

NAUTILATOR

SKALOR

SEAWING

OVERBITE

SNAPTRAP

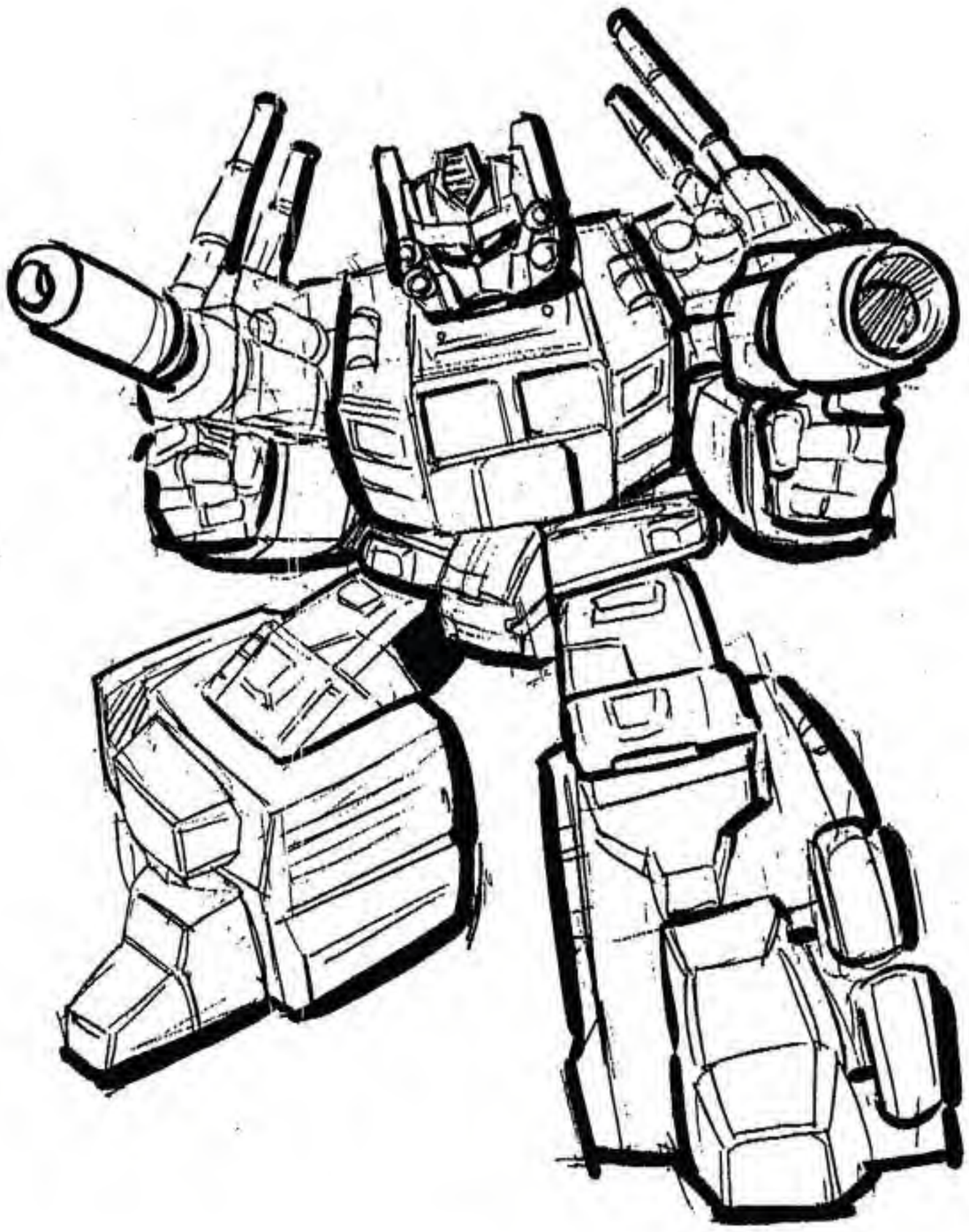
TENTAKIL

PIRANACON

SEACONS

JAPANESE VERSION

1987 PACKAGE BACK



EARLY CONCEPT SKETCHES
FOR POWERMASTER
OPTIMUS PRIME

NEBULAN ERA AUTOBOTS

The 1987-1988 lines were dominated by Head-, Target-, and Powermasters, featuring small partners augmenting their larger compatriots.

POWERMASTER

OPTIMUS PRIME

POINTBLANK

with TARGETMASTER
PEACEMAKER

SURESHOT

with TARGETMASTER
SPOILSPORT

CROSSHAIRS

with TARGETMASTER
PINPOINTER

KUP

with TARGETMASTER
RECOIL

HOT ROD

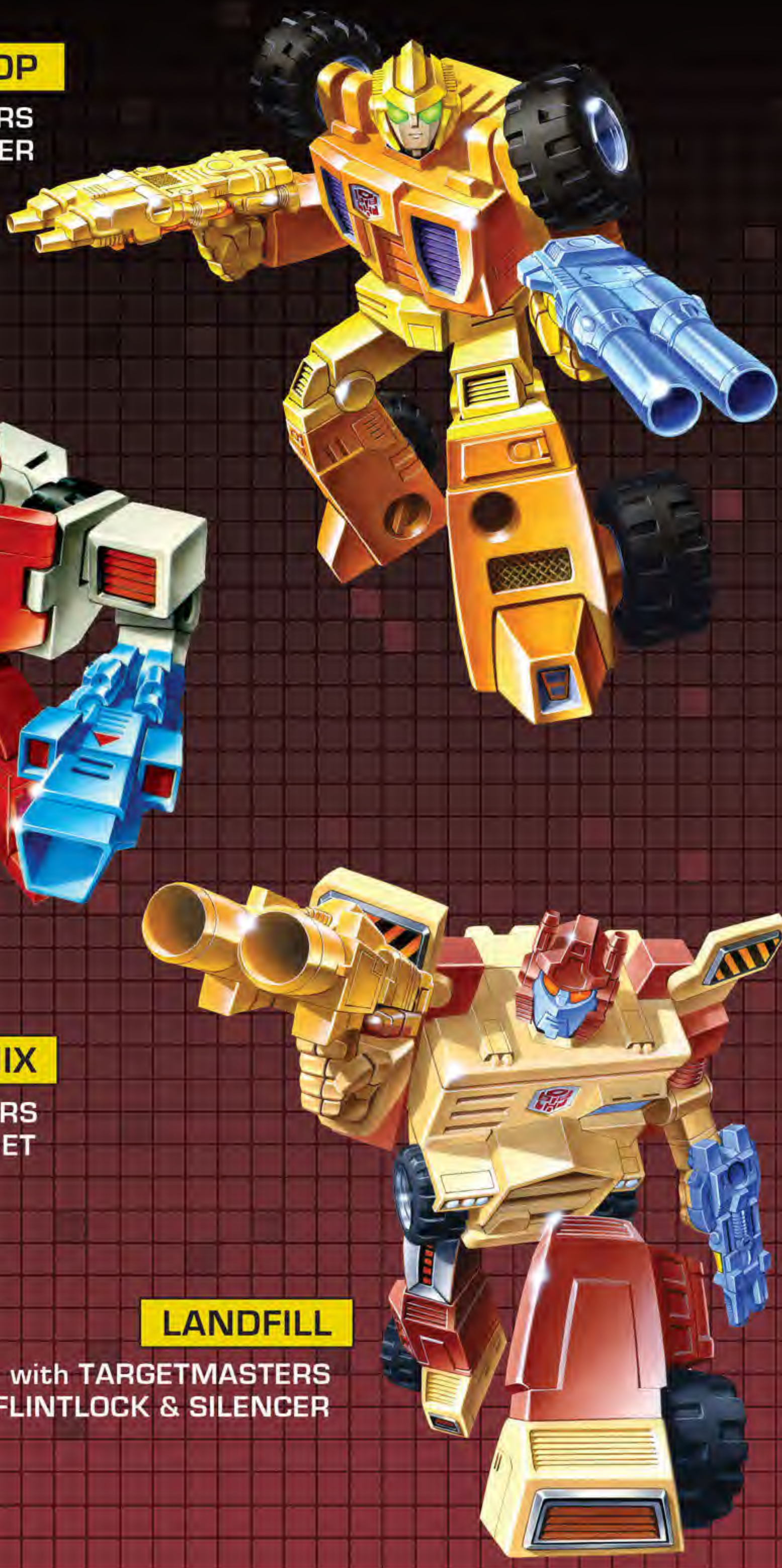
with TARGETMASTER
FIREBOLT

BLURR

with TARGETMASTER
HAYWIRE

SCOOP

with TARGETMASTERS
HOLEPUNCHER & TRACER



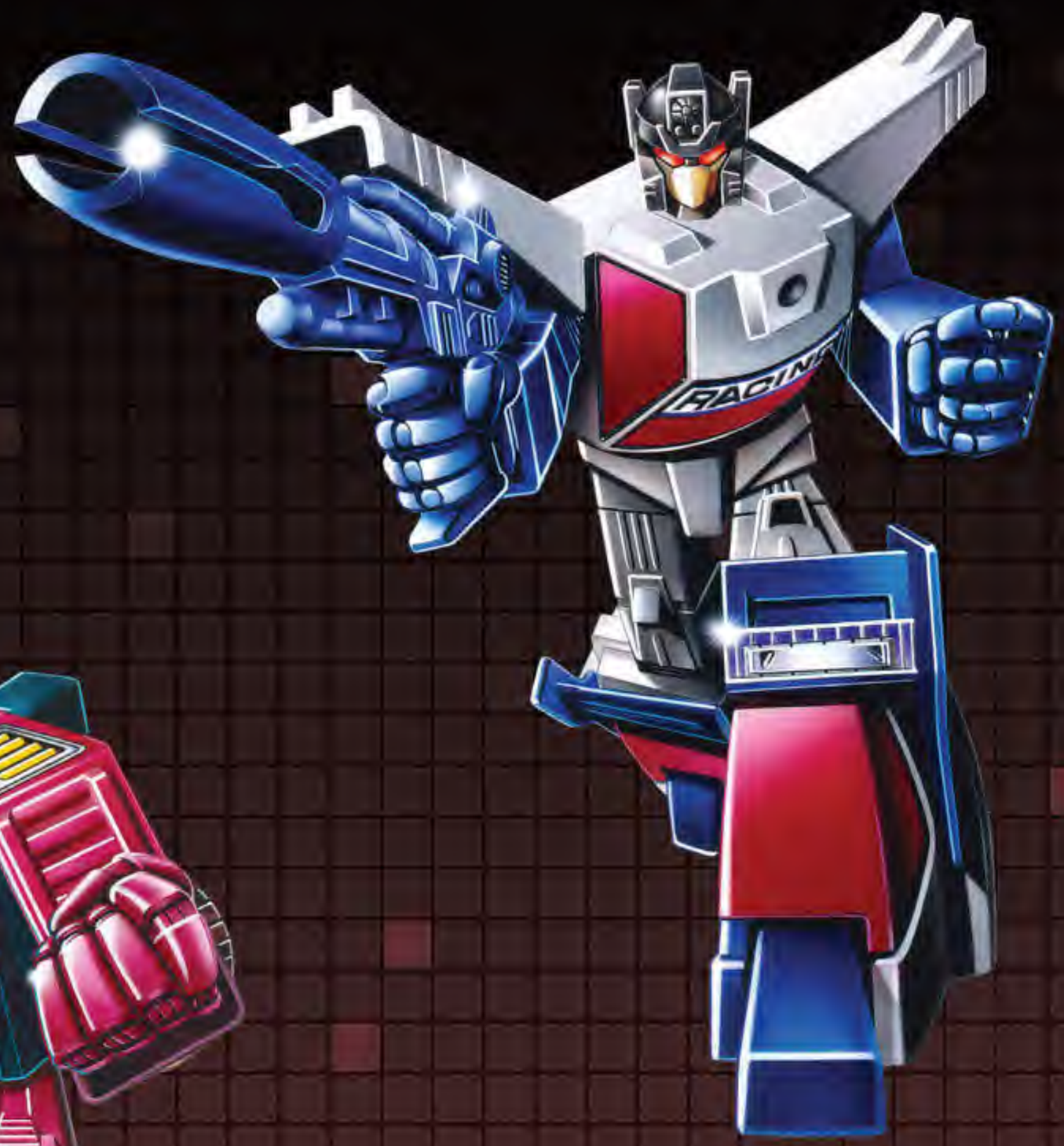
QUICKMIX

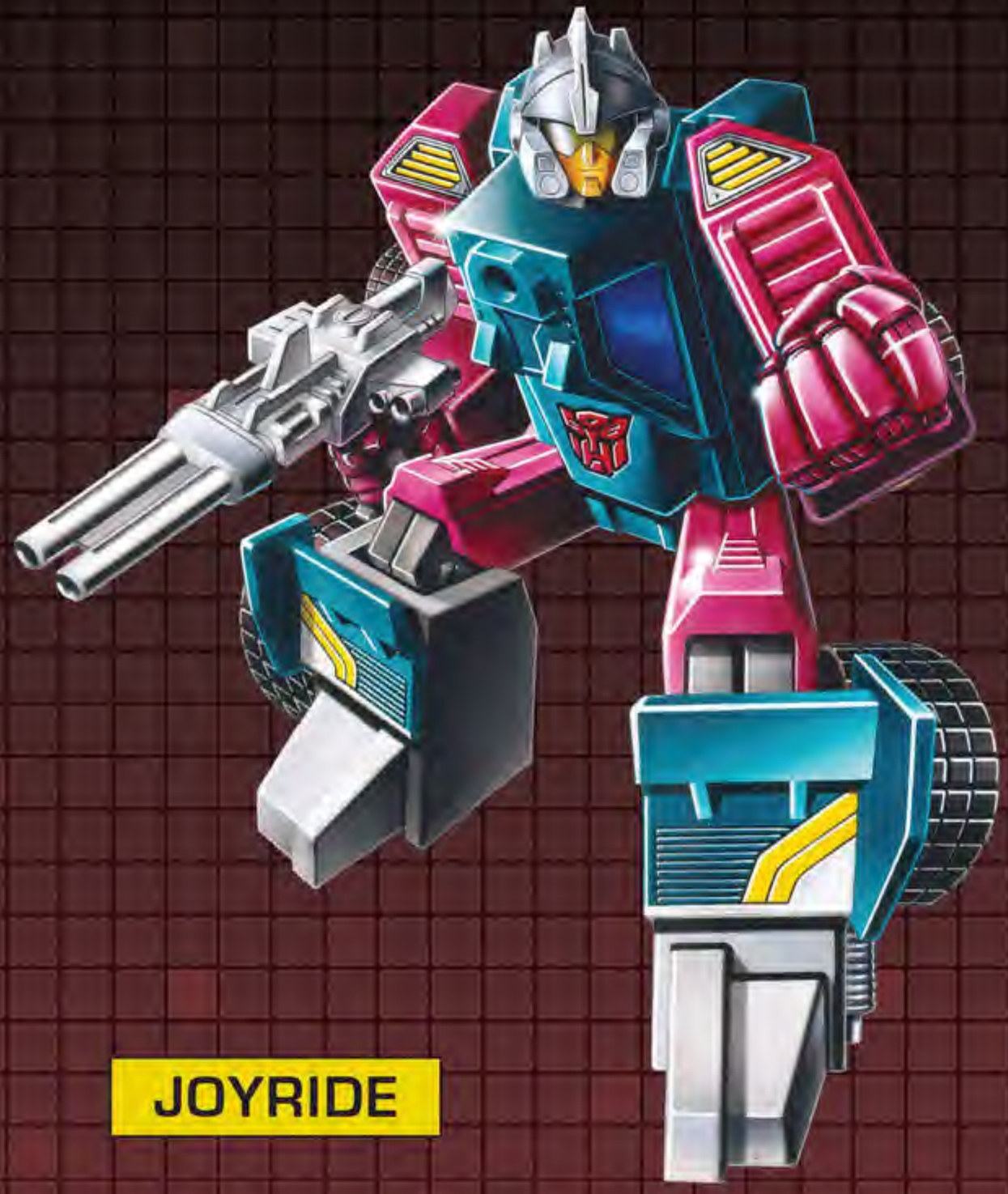
with TARGETMASTERS
BOOMER & RICOCHET

LANDFILL

with TARGETMASTERS
FLINTLOCK & SILENCER

GETAWAY





JOYRIDE

SLAPDASH

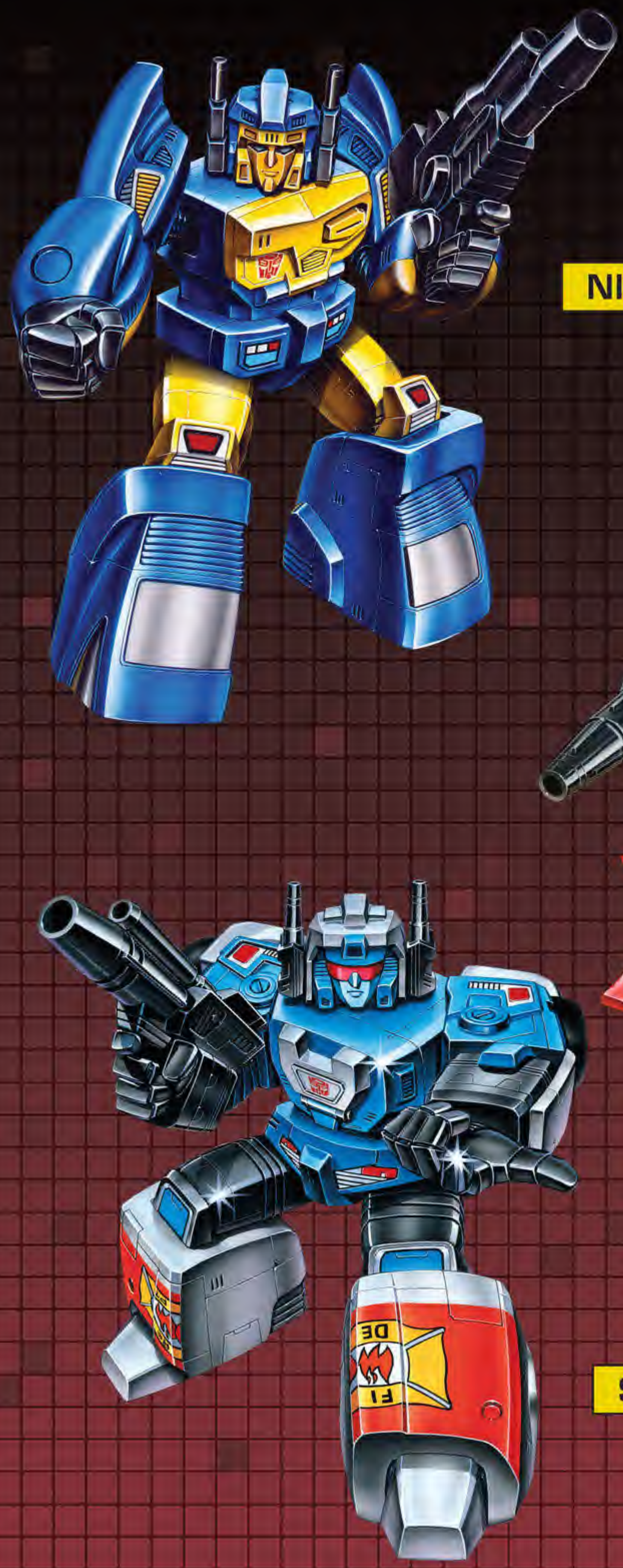
CHROMEDOME

HARDHEAD

BRAINSTORM

HIGHBROW

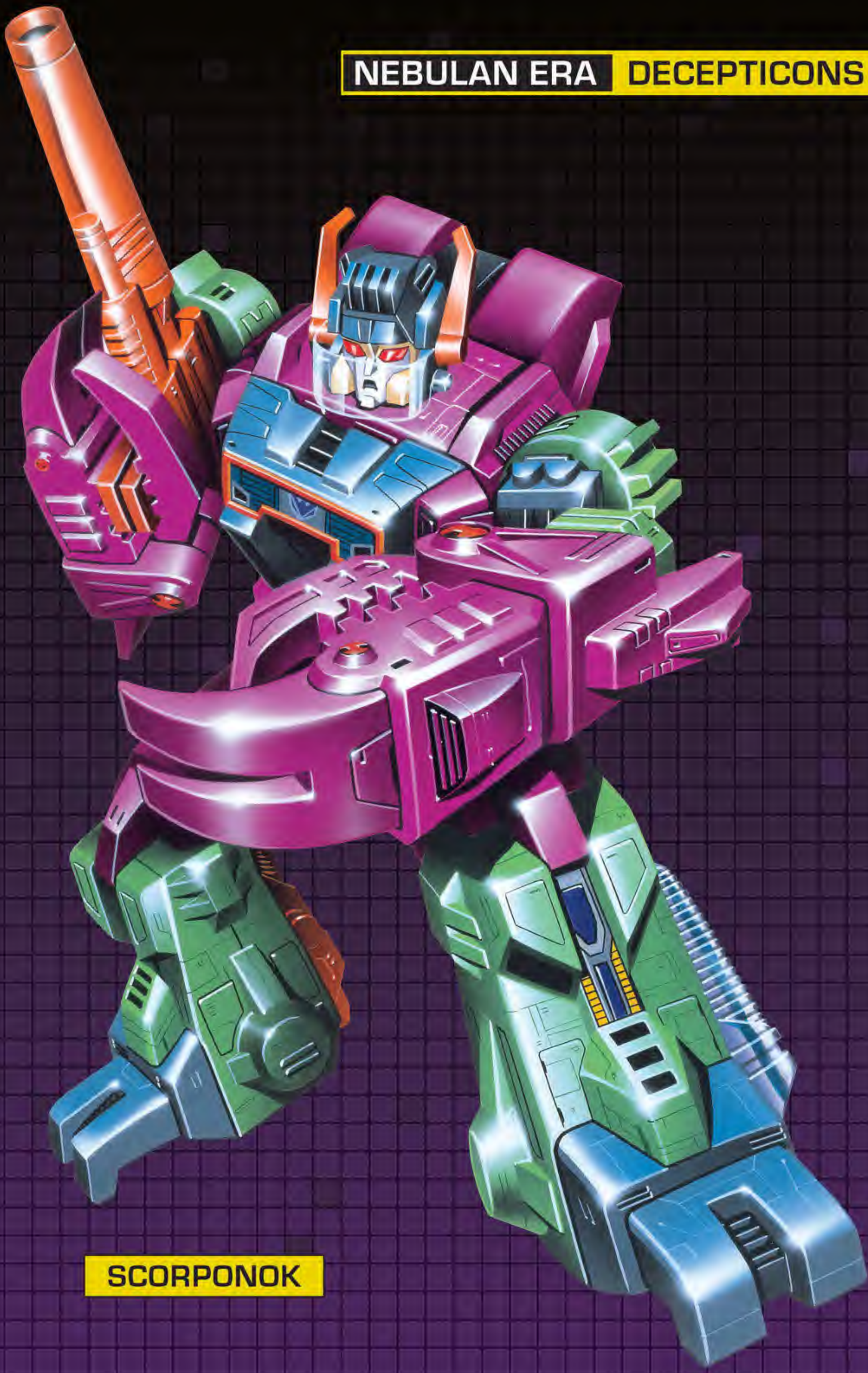
FORTRESS MAXIMUS



NIGHTBEAT

HOSEHEAD

SIREN



SCORPONOK

MISFIRE

with TARGETMASTER
AIMLESS

SLUGSLINGER

with TARGETMASTER
CALIBURST

TRIGGERHAPPY

with TARGETMASTER
BLOWPIPE

APEFACE

CYCLONUS

with TARGETMASTER
NIGHTSTICK

SCOURGE

with TARGETMASTER
FRACAS

SNAPDRAGON

MINDWIPE

WEIRDWOLF

SKULLCRUNCHER

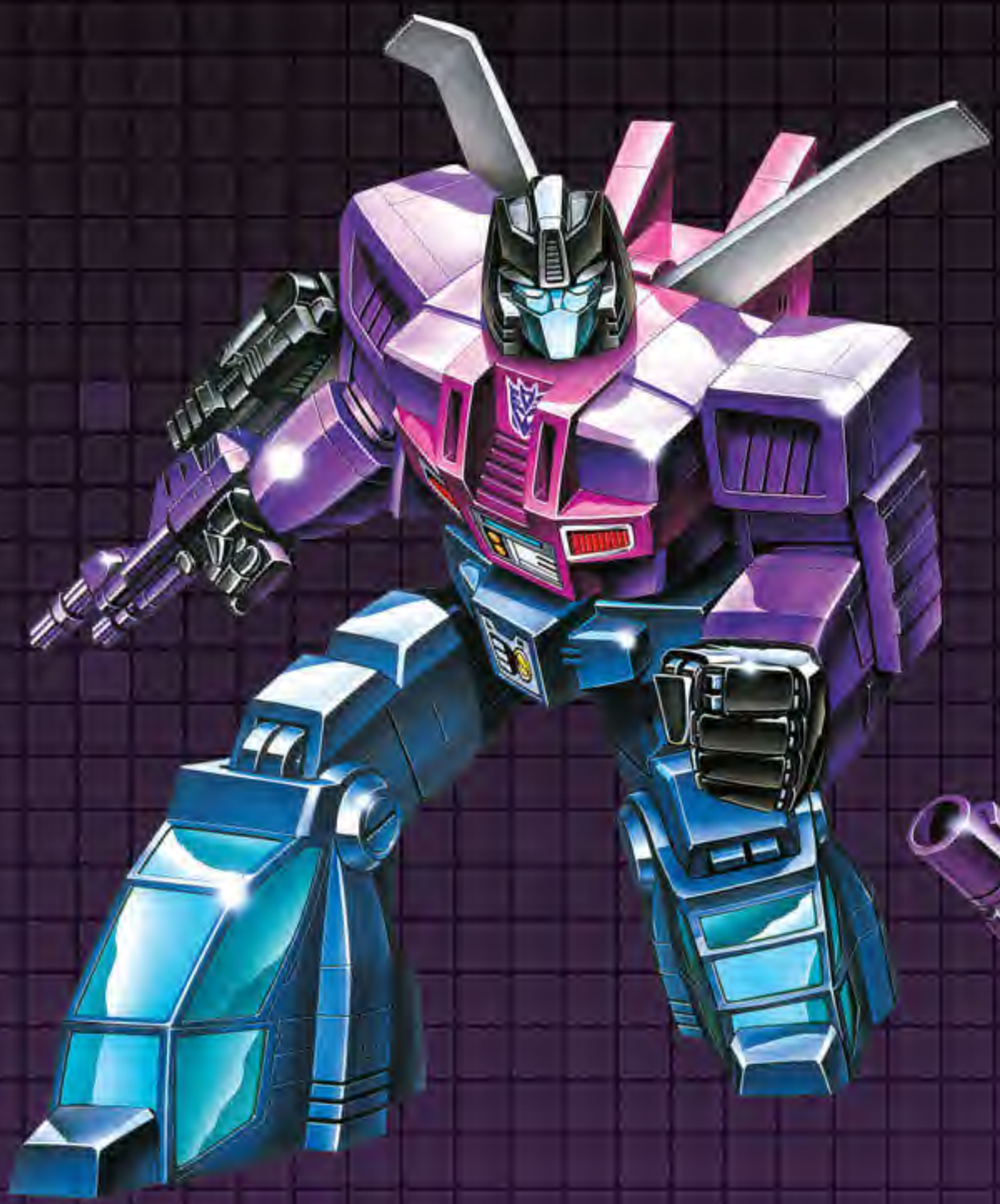
HORRI-BULL

SQUEEZEPLAY

FANGRY

NEEDLENOSE

with TARGETMASTERS
SUNBEAM & ZIGZAG



SPINISTER

with TARGETMASTERS
HAIRSPLITTER & SINGE

QUAKE

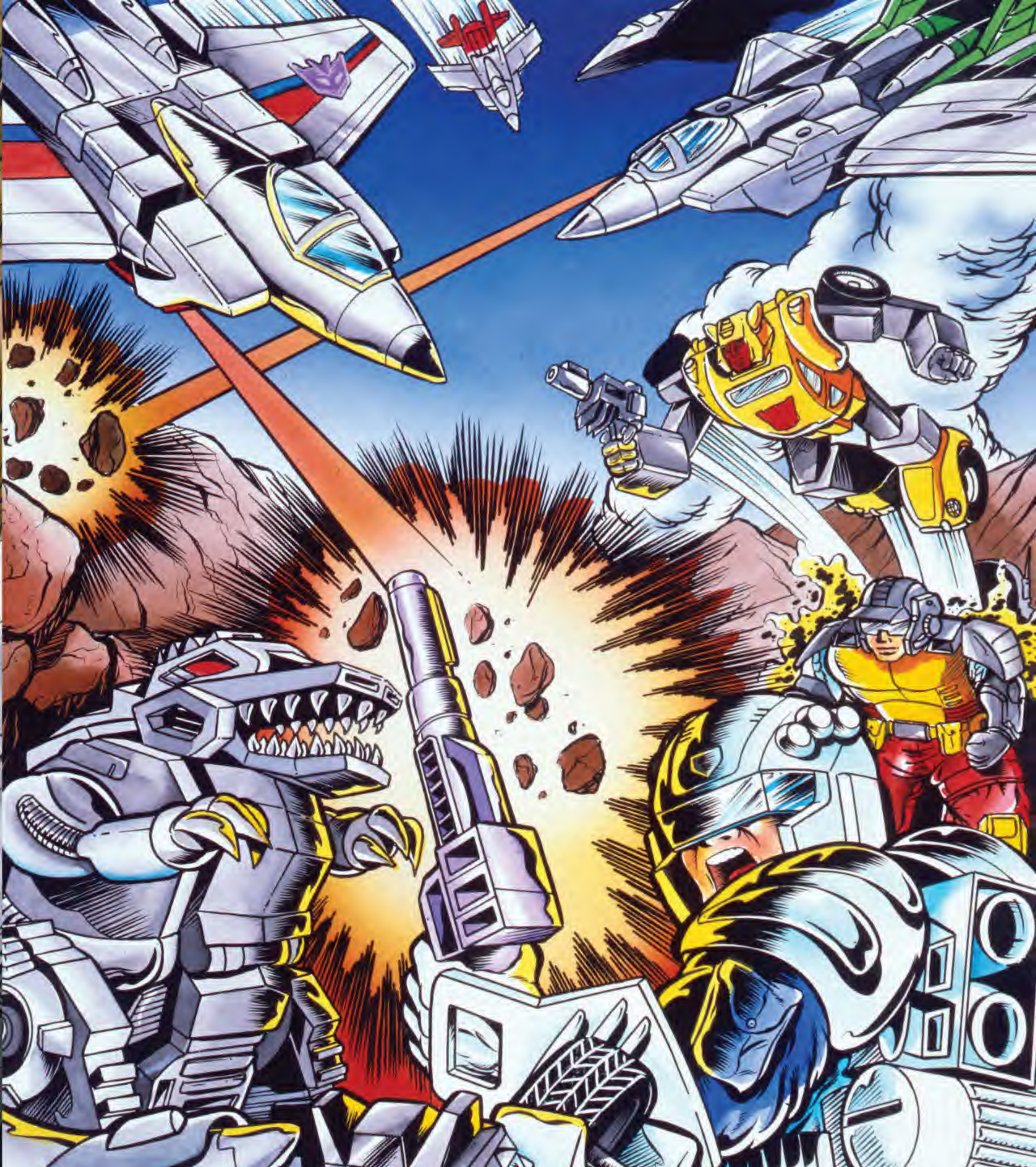
with TARGETMASTERS
TIPTOP & HEATER

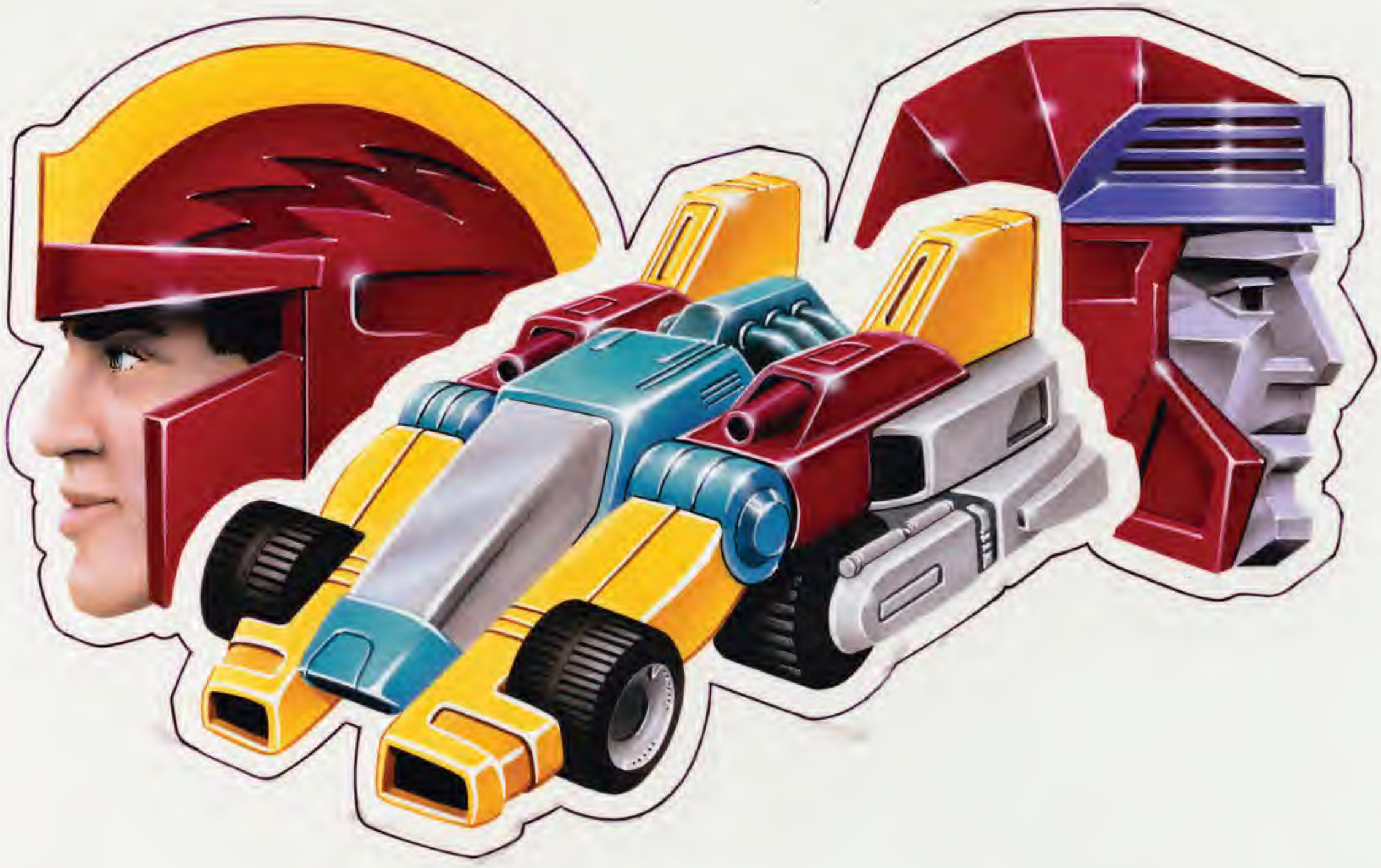
DOUBLEDEALER

DREADWIND

DARKWING

1989 PRETENDERS PACKAGE BATTLE SCENES





TRANSFORMERS
PRETENDERS LOGO

abar color labs 351-8644
abar color labs 351-8644
abar color labs 351-8644

UNUSED PRETENDERS LOGO

BUMBLEBEE

JAZZ

GRIMLOCK

1988 and 1989 saw the concept of disguise taken one level further, with robots hiding inside organic shells.

LANDMINE

WAVERIDER

CLOUDBURST

CHAINCLAW

SKY HIGH

SPLASHDOWN

GROUNDBREAKER

CATILLA

LONGTOOTH

DOUBLEHEADER

PINCHER

CROSSBLADES

GUNRUNNER

VROOM

SKYHAMMER

PRETENDERS DECEPTICONS

ROADBLOCK

BOMB-BURST

SKULLGRIN

SUBMARAUDER

CARNIVAC

IGUANUS

BUGLY

FINBACK

SNARLER

ROADGRABBER

STARSCREAM

THUNDERWING

BLUDGEON

OCTOPUNCH

STRANGLEHOLD

BIRDBRAIN

WILDFLY

ICEPICK

BRISTLEBACK

SLOG

SCOWL

1989 MICROMASTERS PACKAGE BATTLE SCENES

THE TRANSFORMERS

HEROIC AUTOBOT

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE!

TRANSFORMERS

Classic Autobot Logo with technicals

PANTONE 1837C

PANTONE 805c

PANTONE 021c

PANTONE 265c

PANTONE PROCESS YELLOWc

TRANSFORMERS

GENERATION 2

G2 Logo with Pantone Guide

THE TRANSFORMERS

PRETENDERS™

Pretender and Micromaster Logos

MICRO TRANSFORMERS

Autobot Sigils 1990 (left) 1988-1989 (above)

TRANSFORMERS®

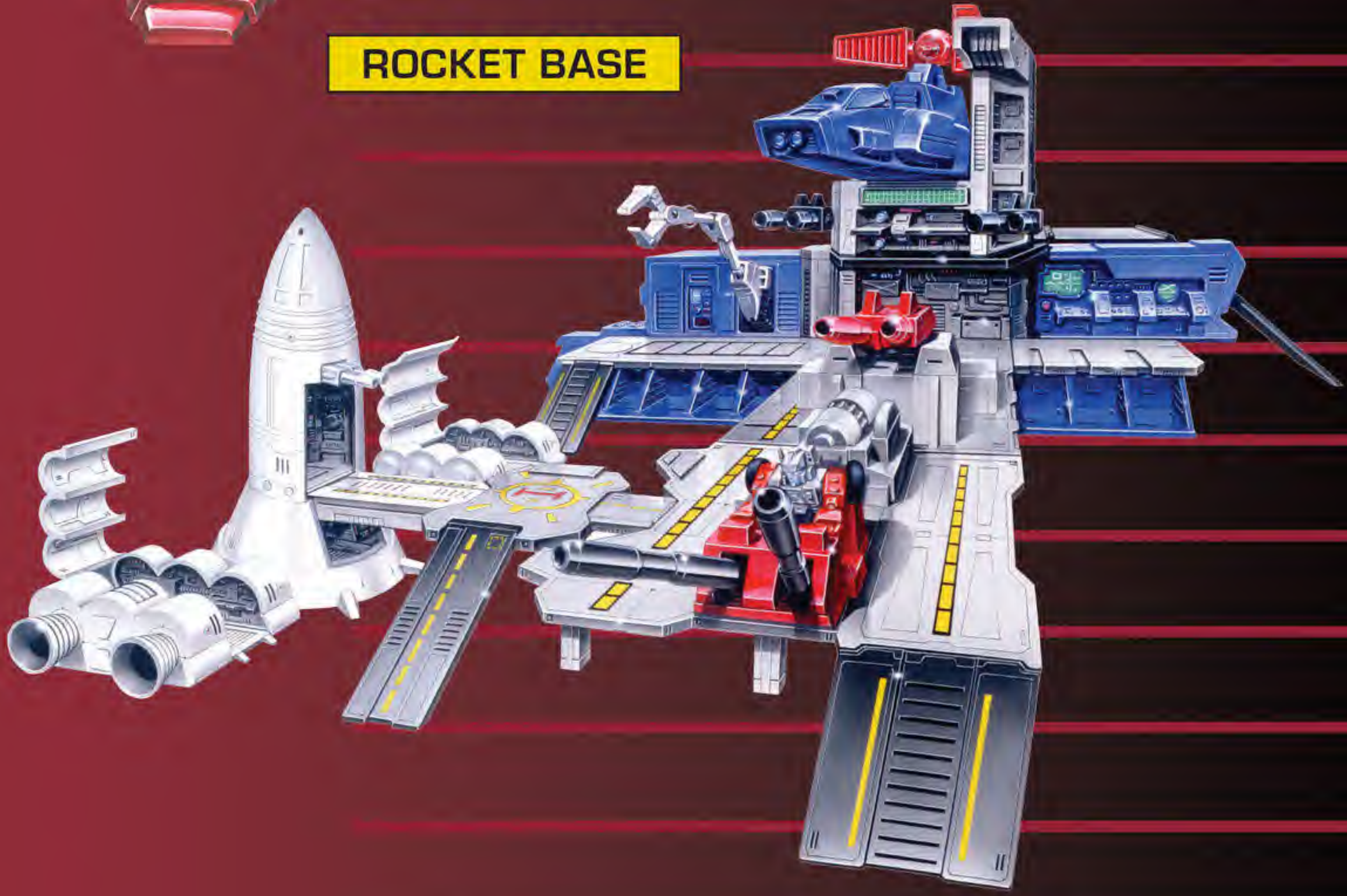
Autobot Logo, 1988-1990

MICROMASTERS AUTOBOTS

In 1989 and 1990, Transformers got small, with robots downsizing to conserve fuel.

COUNTDOWN

ROCKET BASE



HOT ROD PATROL

GREASER

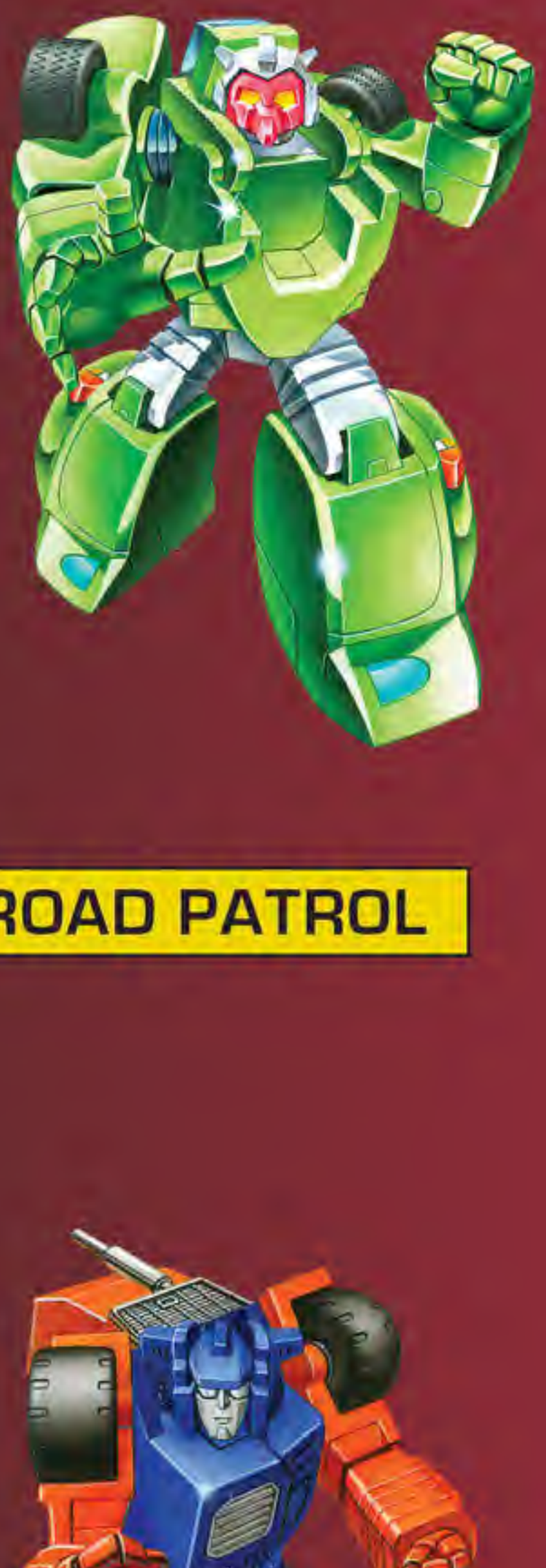
BIG DADDY

HIGHJUMP

MUDSLINGER

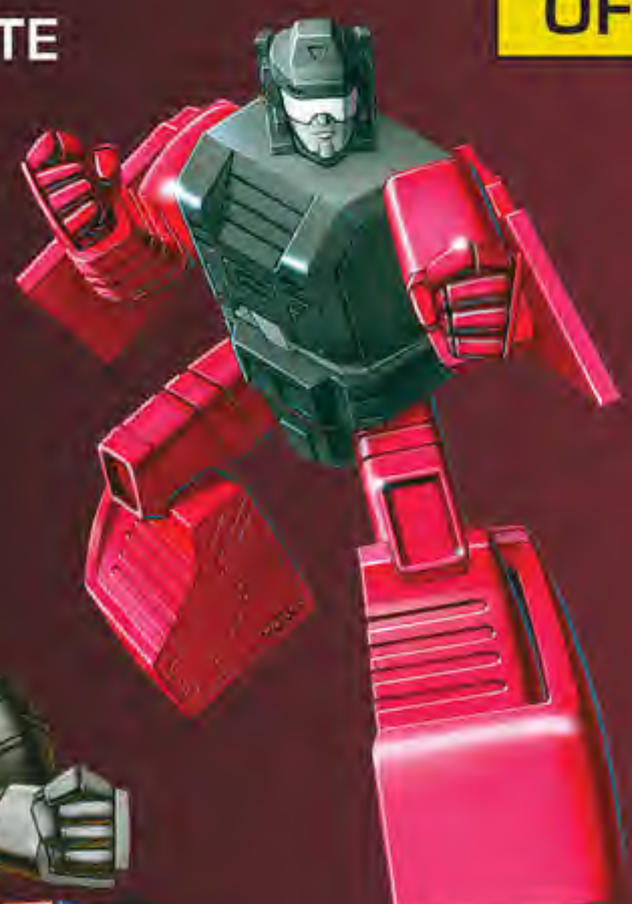
TRIP-UP

HUBS



OFF ROAD PATROL

TOTE



POWERTRAIN

RESCUE PATROL

FIXIT

STAKEOUT

FREE WHEELER

SWINDLER

ROADHANDLER

SEAWATCH

RED HOT

TAILSPIN

RACE CAR PATROL

MONSTER TRUCK PATROL

HYDRAULIC

SLOW POKE

HEAVY TREAD

BIG HAULER

TAKEDOWN

CRUMBLE

NEUTRO

GROUNDPOUNDER

CONSTRUCTION PATROL

AIR PATROL

BLAZE MASTER

TREAD BOLT

EAGLE EYE

SKY HIGH

BATTLE PATROL

BIG SHOT

SUNRUNNER

SIDETRACK

FLAK

OVERLOAD with

CAR CARRIER

ERECTOR with

CRANE

IRONWORKS with

CONSTRUCTION STATION

HOT HOUSE with

FIRE STATION

GUNRUNNER with

LANDSHAKER

JAPANESE VERSION OF ATV

GROUNDSHAKER with

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE

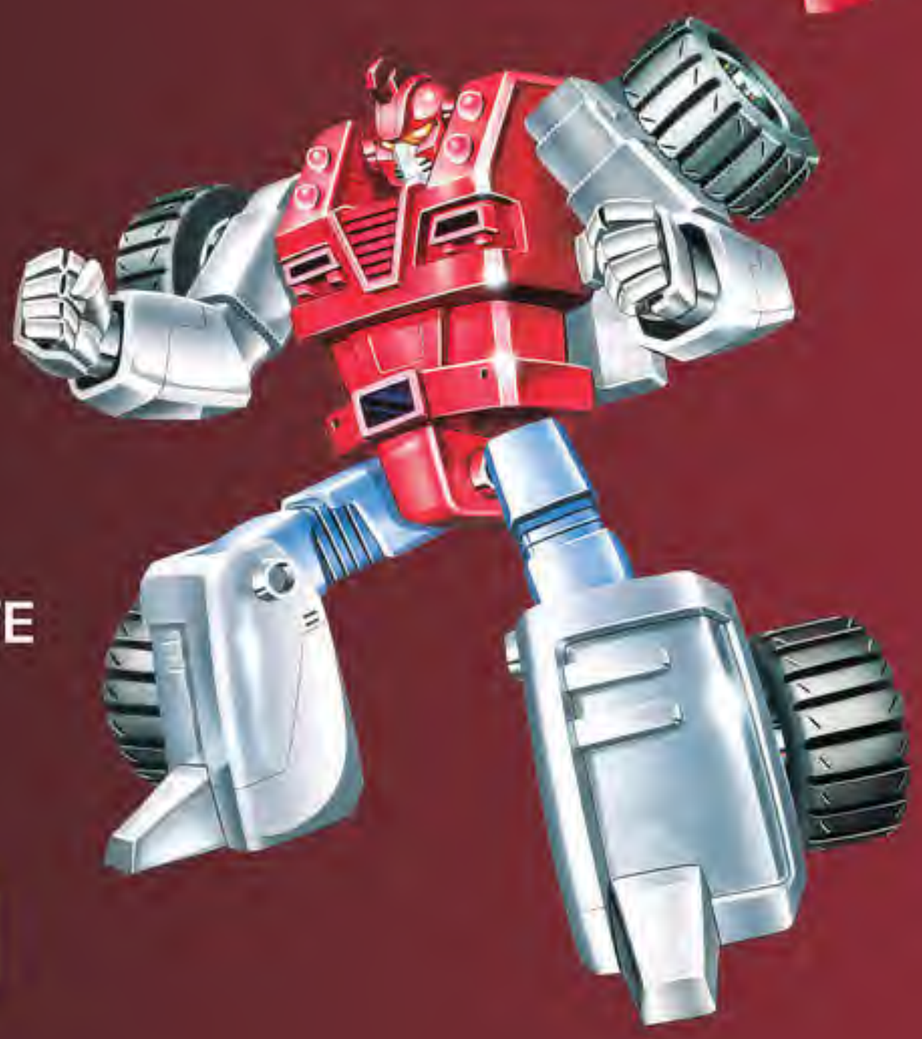
BLAST MASTER

PHASER

MISSILE MASTER

MOONROCK

BARRAGE



HEAVE

ASTRO SQUAD

METRO SQUAD

ROADBURNER

WHEEL BLAZE

POWER RUN

STRIKEDOWN

OILER

SLIDE

MISSILE LAUNCHER

with RETRO & SURGE

TANKER TRUCK

with PIPELINE & GUSHER

MICROMASTERS DECEPTICONS

SKYHOPPER with HELICOPTER

SKYSTALKER with INTERSTELLAR SHUTTLE

RACE TRACK PATROL

ROLLER FORCE

GROUND HOG

MOTORHEAD

BARRICADE

ROAD HUGGER

HYPERDRIVE

BLACKJACK

DETOUR

SPORTS CAR PATROL

NIGHTFLIGHT

STORM CLOUD

WHISPER

TAILWIND

AIR STRIKE PATROL

TRACER

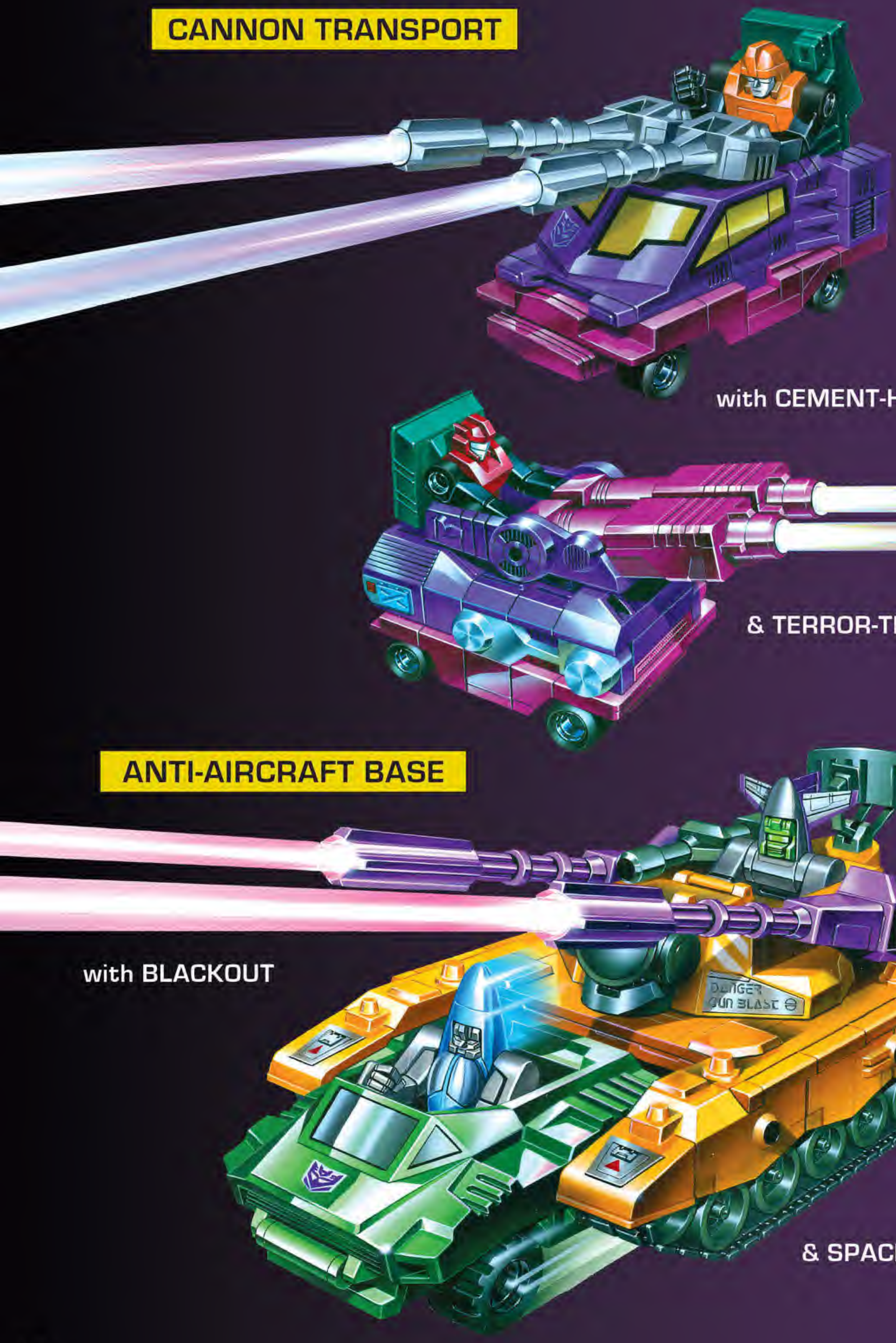
GROWL

DROPSHOT

BOMBSHOCK

MILITARY PATROL

CANNON TRANSPORT



with CEMENT-HEAD

& TERROR-TREAD

ANTI-AIRCRAFT BASE

with BLACKOUT

& SPACESHOT

FLATTOP with

AIRCRAFT CARRIER

ROUGHSTUFF with

MILITARY TRANSPORT

GREASEPIT with

GAS STATION

AIRWAVE with

AIRPORT

BATTLE SQUAD

DIRECT-HIT

POWER PUNCH

VANQUISH

FIRESHOT

HALF-TRACK

MELTDOWN

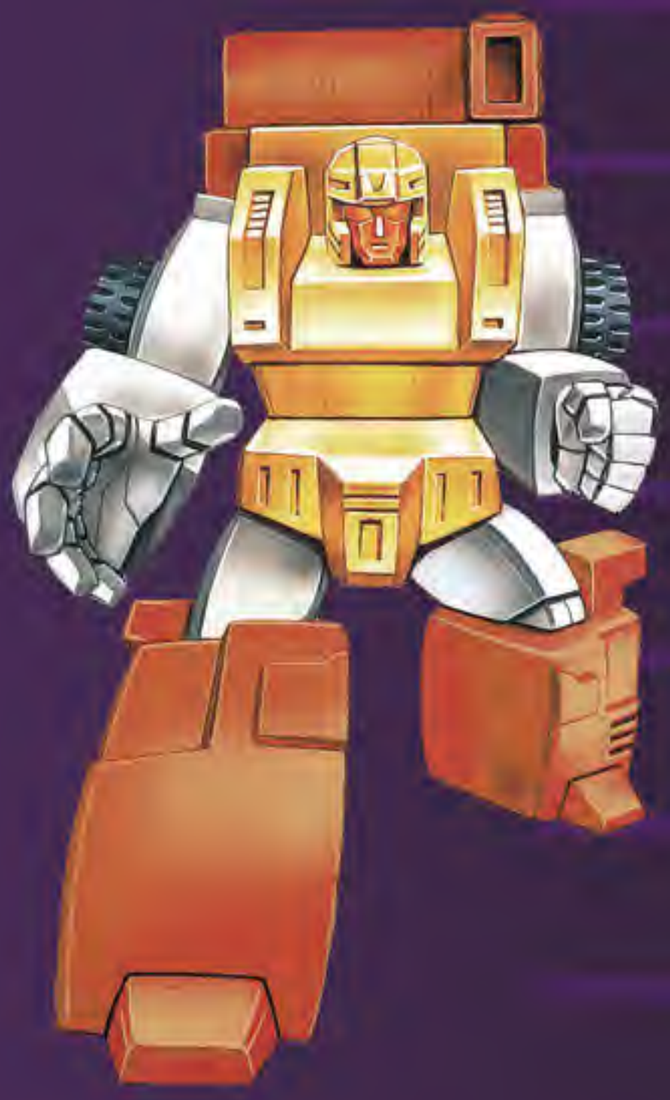
CONSTRUCTOR SQUAD

STONECRUNCHER

EXCAVATOR

GRIT

KNOCKOUT



SLEDGE

HAMMER

1990 ACTION MASTERS PACKAGE BACK

ACTION MASTERS

ACTION MASTERS

ACTION MASTERS

DEVASTATOR

ACTION MASTERS AUTOBOTS

The final year of G1 saw the introduction of Action Masters. The superfuel Nucleon gave Cybertronians new powers but robbed them of the ability to transform.

OPTIMUS PRIME

OPTIMUS PRIME'S

ARMORED CONVOY

ROLLOUT

INFERNO

RAD

JAZZ

BLASTER

MAINFRAME

KICK-OFF

WHEELJACK

WHEELJACK'S

TURBO RACER

SNARL

GRIMLOCK

SPROCKET'S

ATTACK CRUISER

OVER-RUN

OVER-RUN'S

ATTACK COPTER

ACTION MASTERS DECEPTICONS

MEGATRON

MEGATRON'S NEUTRO-FUSION TANK

AXER

TREADSHOT

KROK

SOUNDWAVE

SHOCKWAVE

GUTCRUNCHER

GUTCRUNCHER'S

STRATOTRONIC JET

Roadfire (Zone)
MIB (Mint In Box)

Minelba (Masterforce)
MISB (Mint In Sealed Box)

Part Three: Made In Japan

Though Transformers disappeared from U.S. shelves in 1991, this was not the case in Japan. The product line had already converged with, and then diverged from, the U.S. marketing strategy. Observing the tremendous success of the U.S. launch of Transformers in the States in 1984, Takara partnered with Hasbro to replace ageing Micro Change and Diaclone products with the innovative new take provided by The Transformers marketing machine. The American cartoon was dubbed into Japanese, and Transformers became a smash hit in Japan.

So great was its success that, while the American Transformers cartoon ended in 1987 with a three-part miniseries devoted to the Head- and Targetmasters, in Japan there would be three more full cartoon series. The first series was a 35-episode anime called Headmasters (1987). Though tonally quite similar to the third season of the U.S. cartoon, it began to introduce some new characters unique to the Japanese market and thus is the subject of our Chapter Eight, along with a few characters from earlier years who had divergent artwork from their U.S. counterparts.

Chapter Nine continues to examine The Transformers in Japan with Masterforce (1988), a 47-episode anime. This line was unique among Transformers series in its strong focus on the human component. Indeed, the stars of the show and many of the villains were humans piloting Transtector mecha, rather than robots from the planet Cybertron. While there were some unique molds introduced in Masterforce, much of the artwork in this chapter consists of American toys from the 1988 line, repainted for the Japanese market.

Not so with Victory (1989), the third Japanese Transformers anime and the subject of our Chapter Ten. Almost all of the toys were developed exclusively for the Japanese market, and featured a host of new gimmicks. The Pretenders and Micromasters of 1989 had little place in this line, which included such sublines as the Brainmasters, whose faces could become smaller robots; the Breastmasters, whose chestplates could become weapons or animals; and the Multiforce, small robots who could become the top or bottom halves of midsized robots and who could all combine into a larger form. This feature would be echoed years later in 2004 with the Powerlinx gimmick of Transformers Energon.

Chapter Eleven finishes the Japanese portion of the book. It covers all subsequent Japanese franchises, starting with Zone (1990). Zone received a single direct-to-video anime episode, the last Japanese Transformers cartoon for over a decade. The lines continued to contract in size, with The Return of Convoy (1991) and Operation Combination (1992) lines closing out the Japanese contribution to Transformers Generation 1 in 1992. Zone and The Return of Convoy each featured a few new anchor pieces, with the line bulked out by Micromasters imported from the U.S. Operation Combination was more of a mixed bag, with new Micromaster six-combiner teams fighting alongside toys imported from the UK and even redecoes of Scramble City molds from late 1985.

Blacker (Victory) 360° View
MISB (Mint In Sealed Box)

1985 PACKAGE BACK
(JAPANESE VARIANT)

FLARE JET HEAD

MOON JET HEAD

DARK JET HEAD

SHADOW JET (JAPAN)
aka FALCON (EUROPE)

Europe saw six Predator toys released in 1992. Four of them saw releases in Japan later that year as the Jet Corps. They had new names and, in three cases, new heads. The Autobot Turbomasters AKA Road Corps, too, saw similar releases in Europe and Japan, though with only one new head. (See page 172)

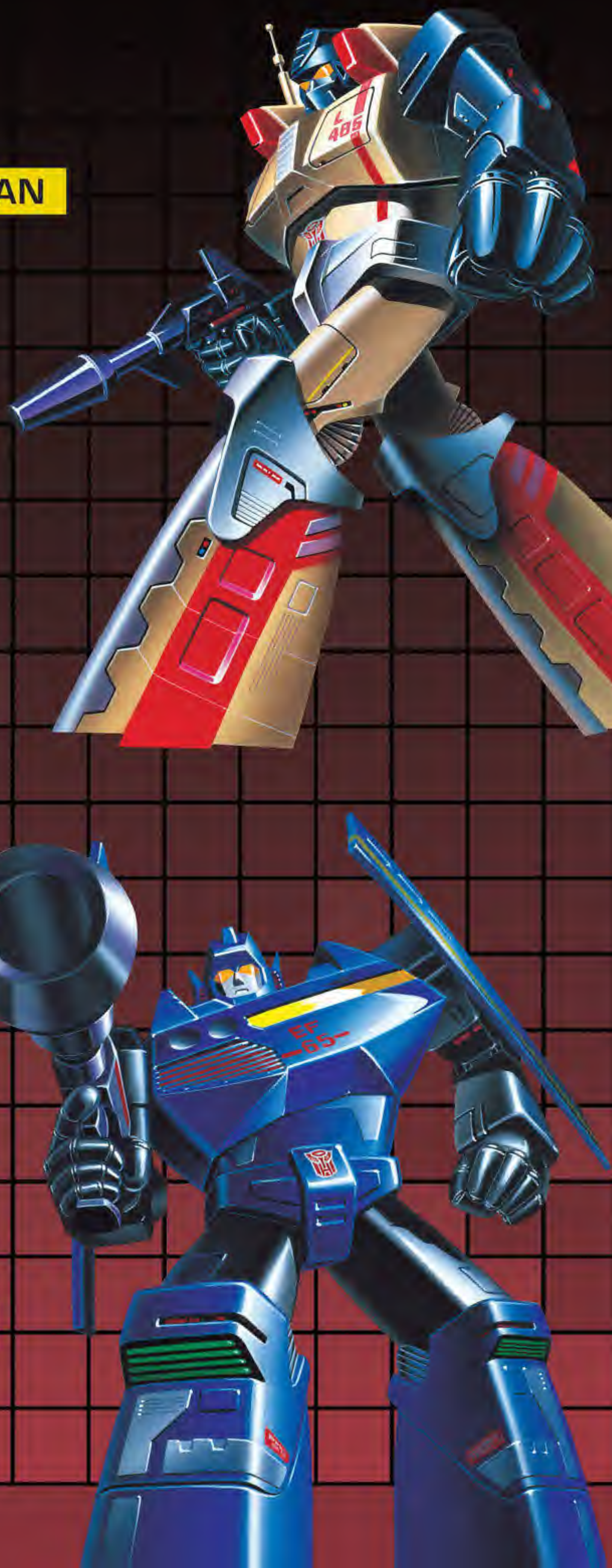
HEADMASTERS + CYBERTRONS

FORTRESS MAXIMUS

Transformers flourished overseas as well. Headmasters was the first Japanese Transformers series, though Japan had a few unique variant toys before then.

TRAINBOTS

SEIZAN



SUIKEN

GETSUEI

YUKIKAZE

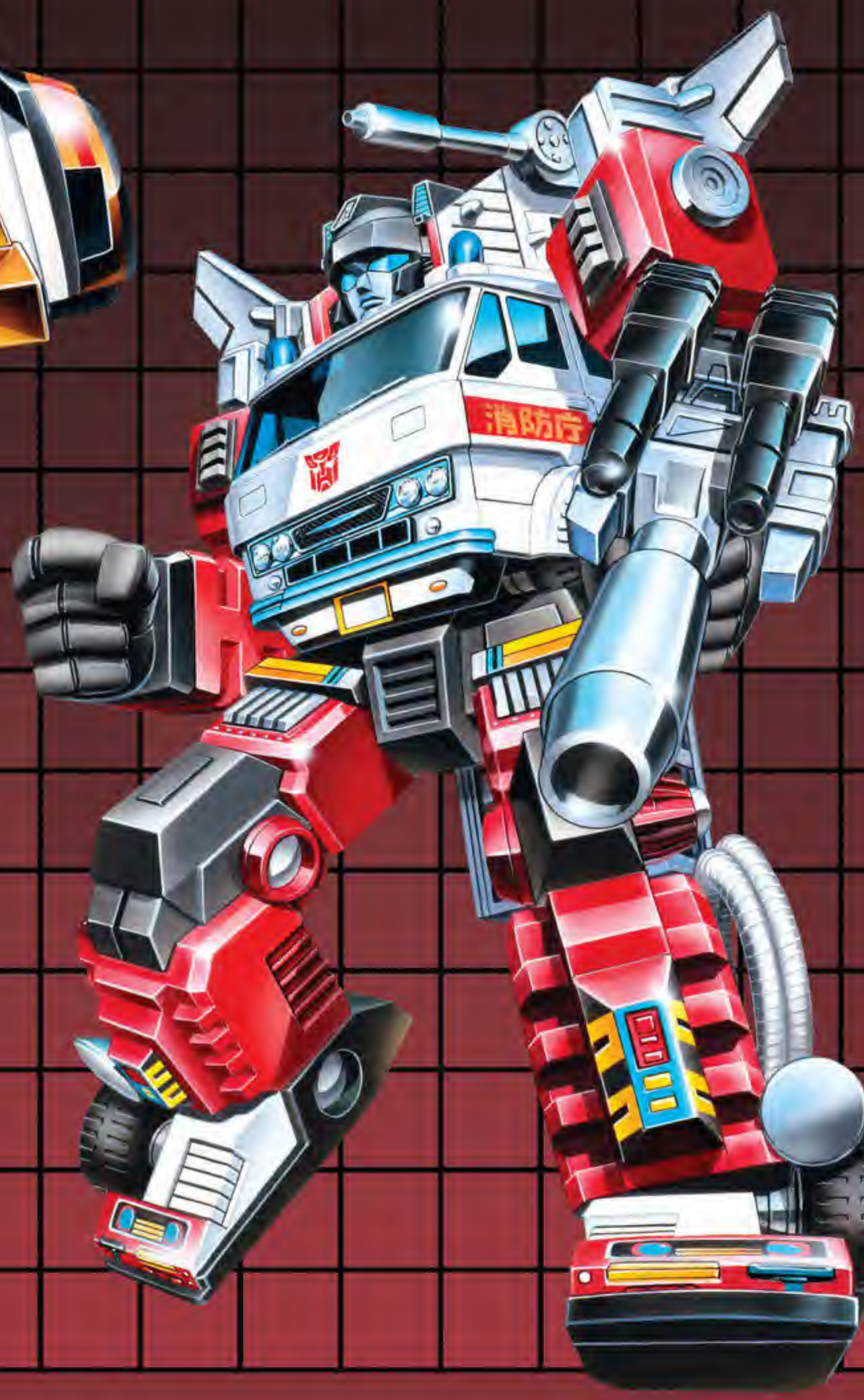
SHOUKI

KAEN

RAIDEN

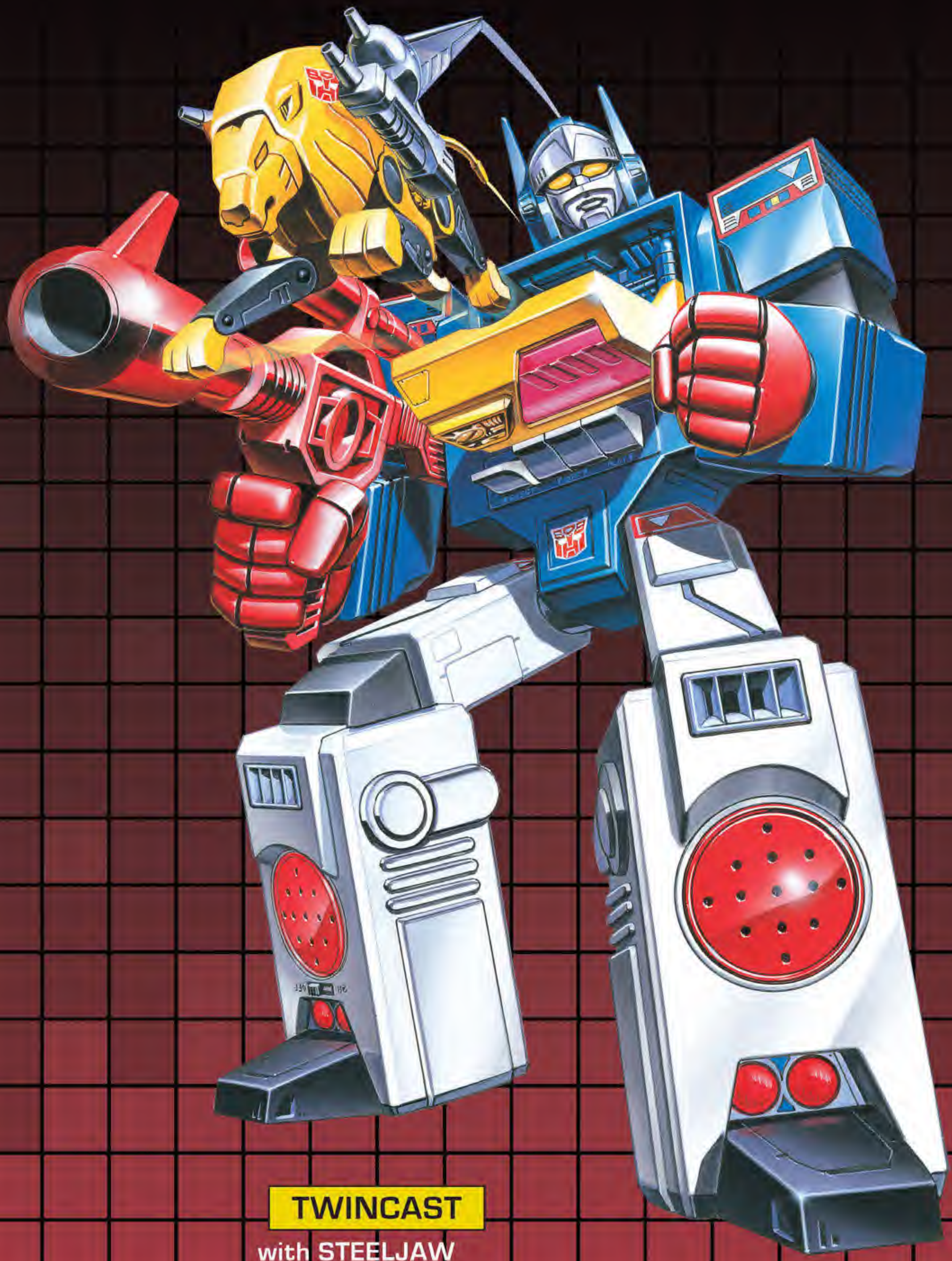
STEPPER

with TARGETMASTER
NEBULON



ARTFIRE

with TARGETMASTER
NIGHTSTICK



TWINCAST
with STEELJAW

SOUNDBLASTER
with BUZZSAW
PLAY
REC
REC PLAY
REC/BATT
HEADMASTERS + DESTRONS

MEGATRON

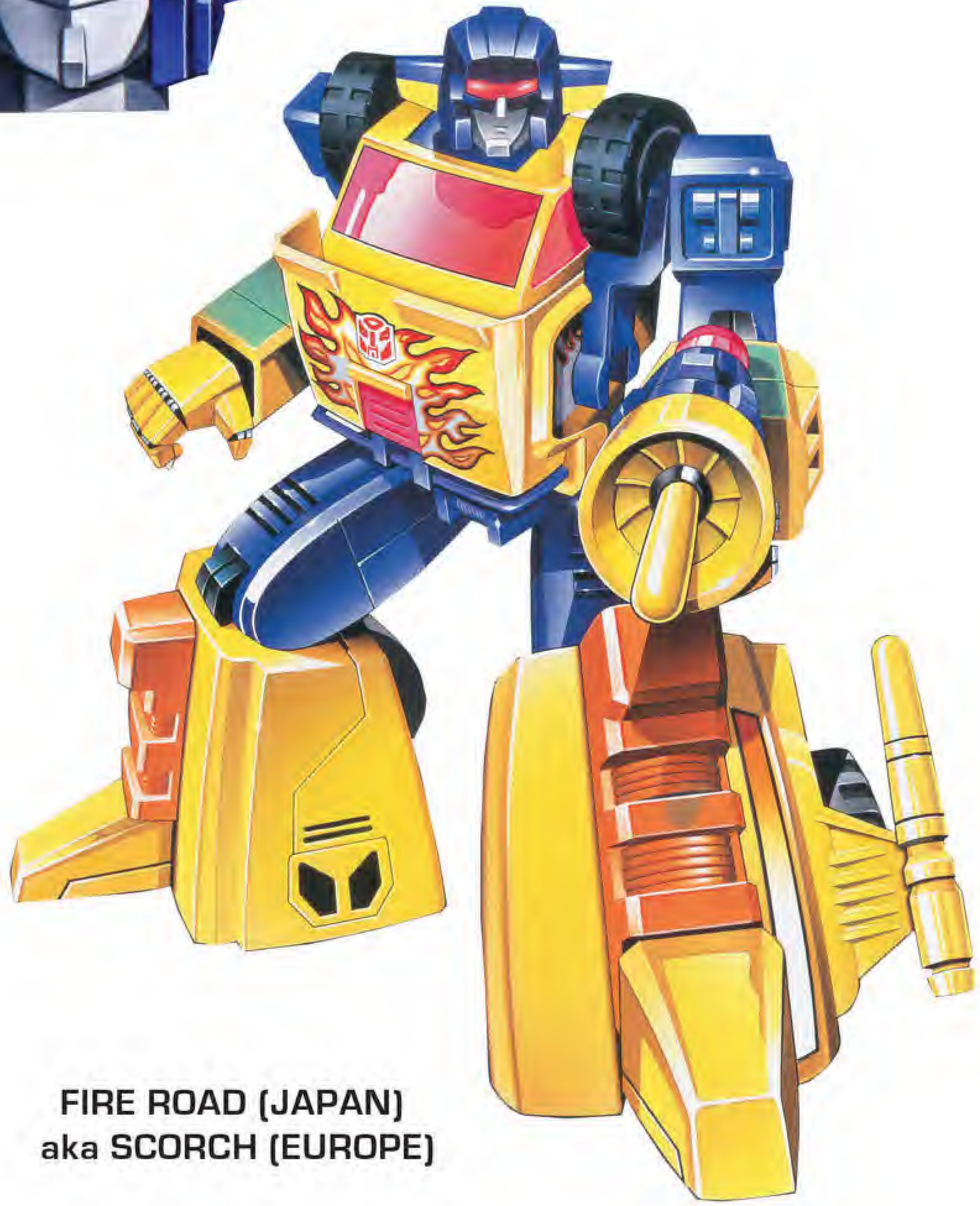
ALTERNATE DESIGNS

REFLECTOR

MICRO CHANGE
CAMERA ROBO MC-05
MICROX ARTWORK

1988 PACKAGE BACK

MACH ROAD HEAD



FIRE ROAD (JAPAN)
aka SCORCH (EUROPE)

MASTERFORCE CYBERTRONS

The second Japanese series was Masterforce. Though there were a few unique toys, Masterforce largely consisted of repainted toys from America.

GOD GINRAI

GODBOMBER

DOUBLECLOUDER

METALHAWK

RANGER

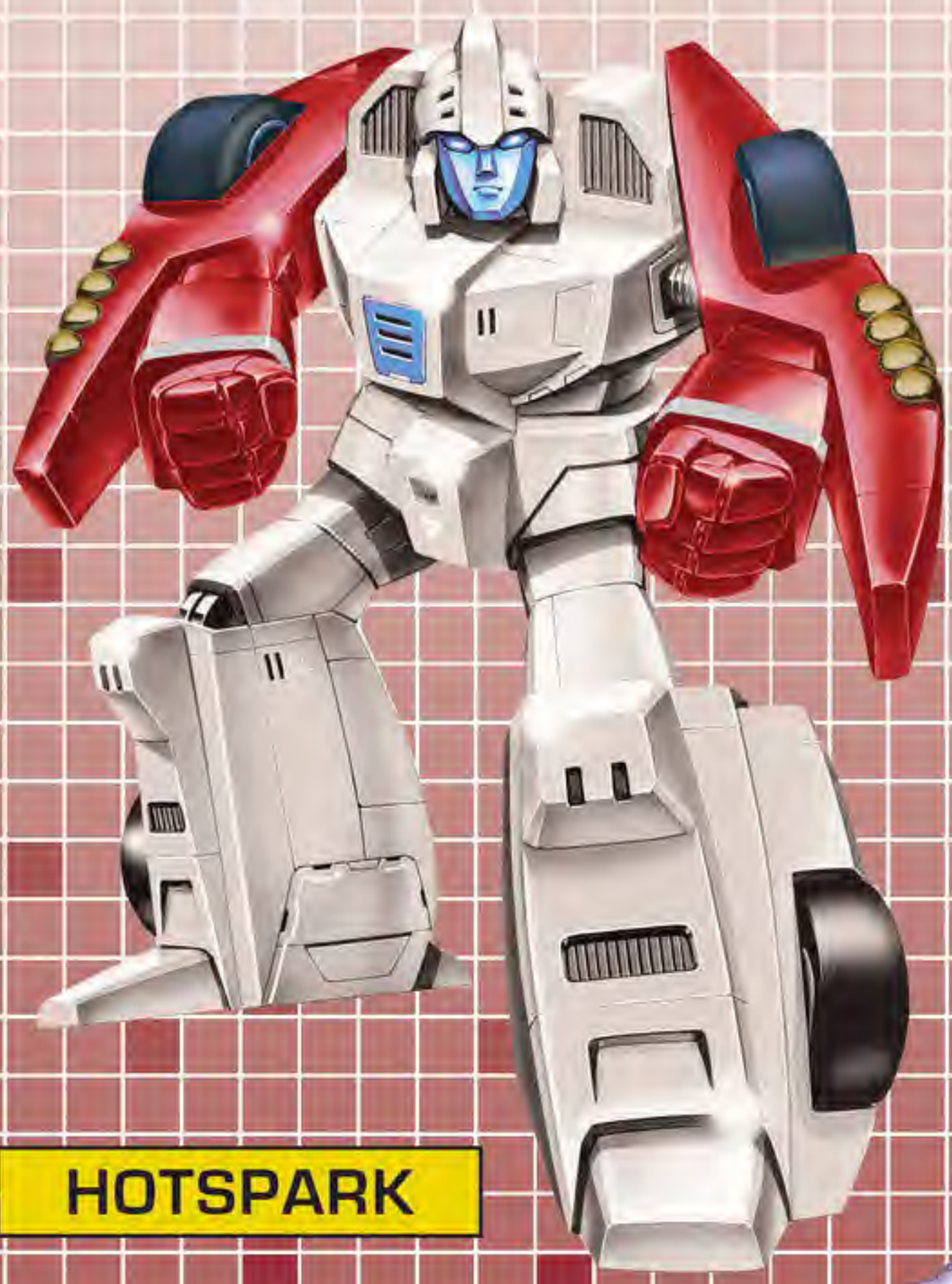
GOSHOOTER

MINERVA

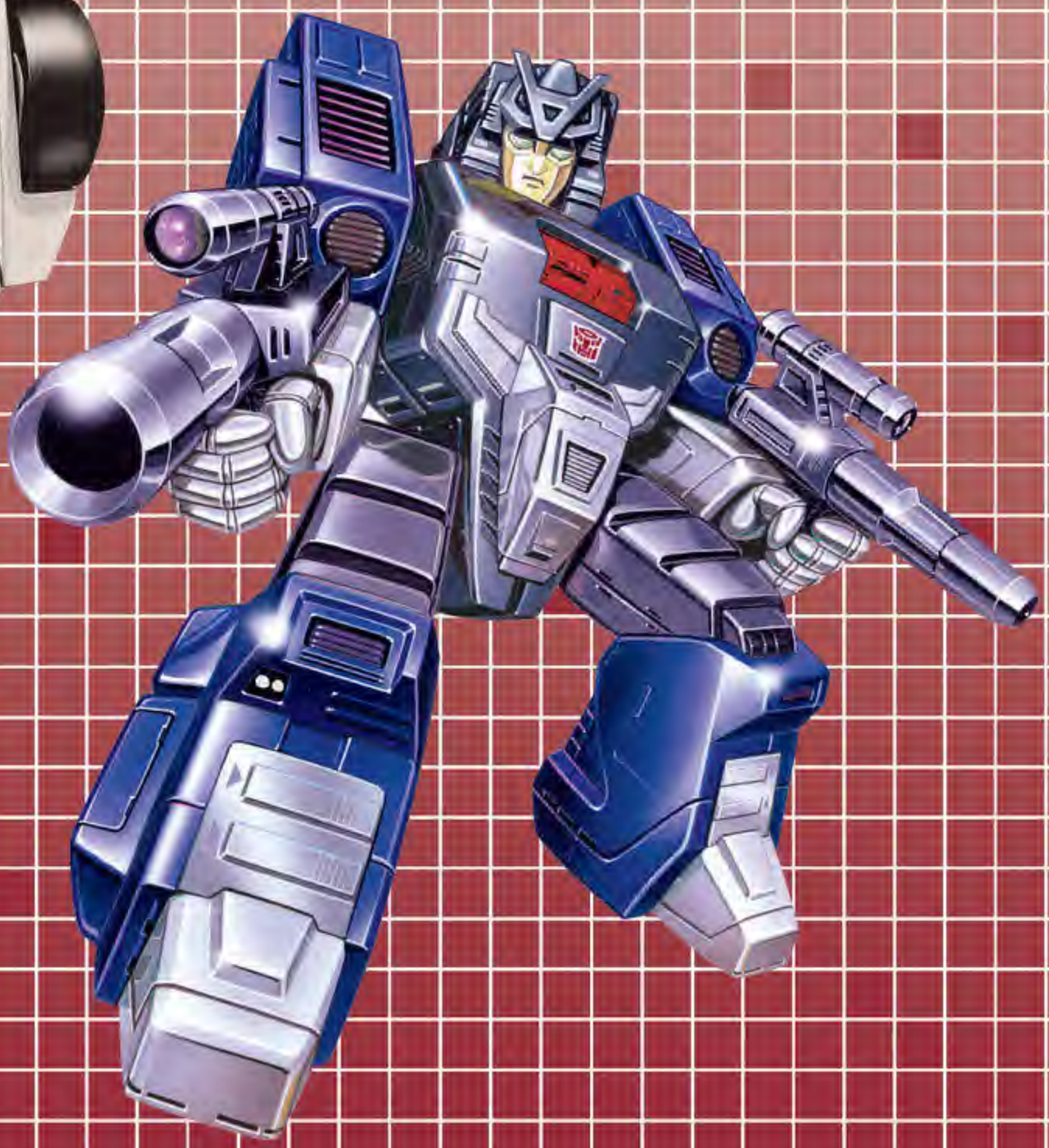
GRAND MAXIMUS

GRAND

HARDSPARK



HOTSPARK



SIXKNIGHT

MASTERFORCE DESTRONS

BLACKZARAK

OVERLORD

UK VERSION

BROWNING

JAVIL

GUZZLE

HYDRA

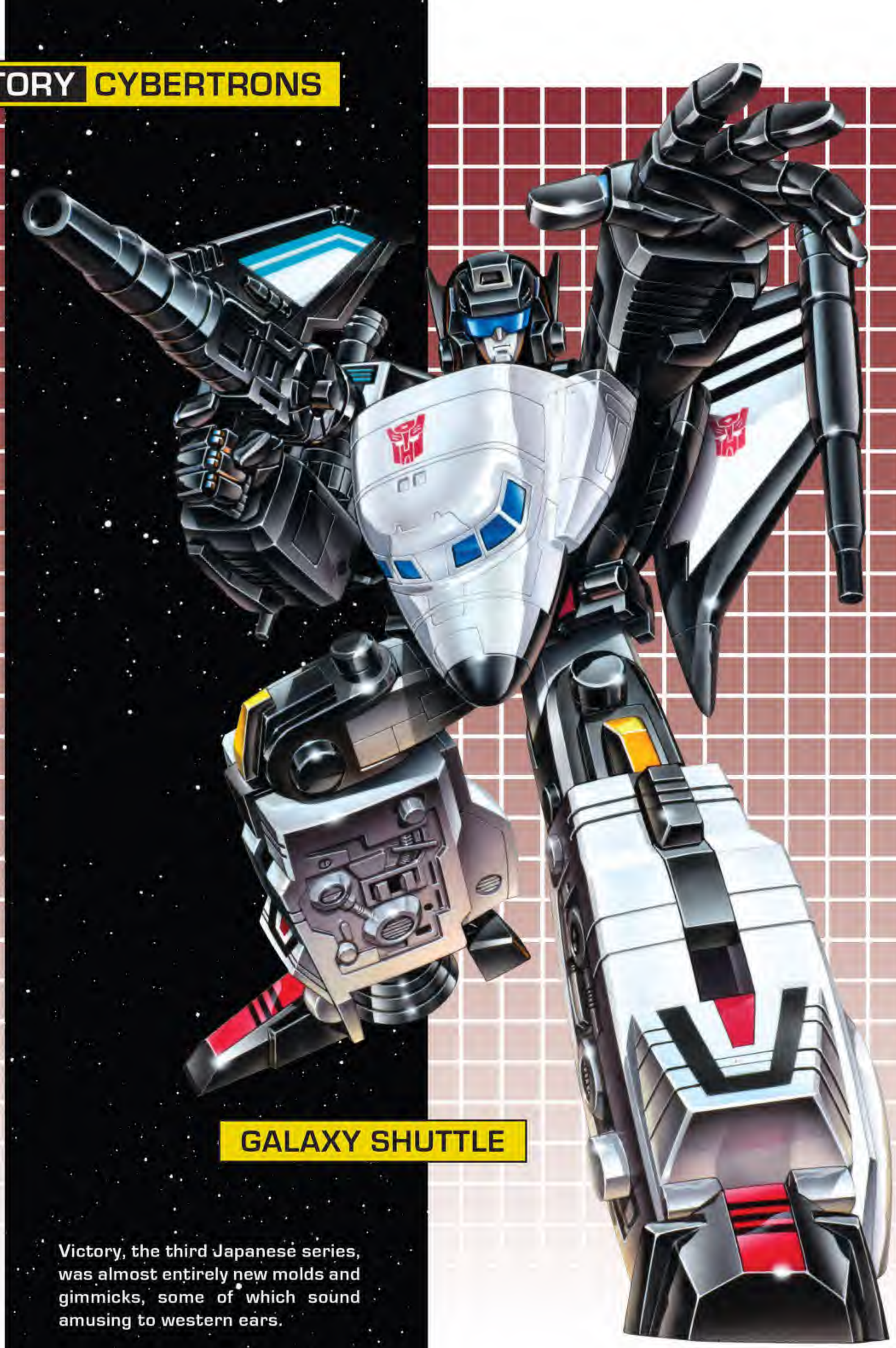
BUSTER

DARKWINGS

1989 VICTORY PACKAGE BACK

ALTERNATE STAR SABER ART

VICTORY CYBERTRONS

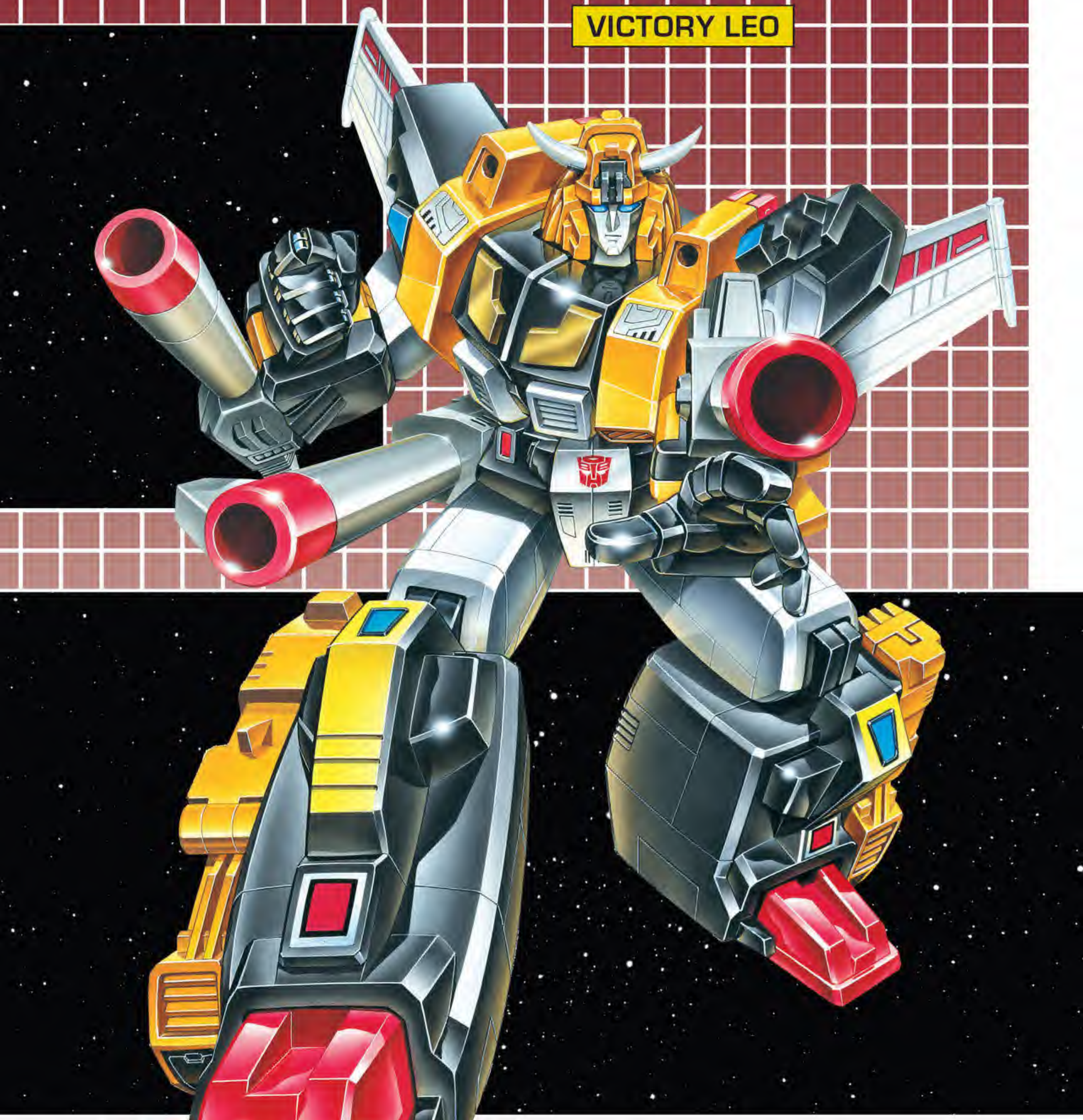


GALAXY SHUTTLE

Victory, the third Japanese series, was almost entirely new molds and gimmicks, some of which sound amusing to western ears.

STAR SABER

VICTORY LEO



LASTER

BRAVER

BLACKER

BRAINMASTERS

ROAD CAESAR

LANDCROSS

MULTIFORCE

MACHTACKLE

WINGWAVER

DASHTACKER

GREATSHOT

VICTORY DESTRONS

DESZARAS

DRILLHORN

JARUGA

BREASTFORCE

GAIHAWK

HELLBAT

KILLBISON

LEOZAK

LIOKAISER

DINOFORCE

DINOKING

KAKURYU

GORYU

YOKURYU

GAIRYU

RAIRYU

DORYU

KAKURYU

GORYU

GAIRYU

YOKURYU

RAIRYU

DORYU

BLUE BACCHUS

CROSSFORMERS

BLACK SHADOW

1991 RETURN OF CONVOY PACKAGE BACK

Classic Decepticon
Logo with technicals

THE TRANSFORMERS

EVIL DECEPTICON

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE!

PANTONE YELLOW 100%

PANTONE 56% M 56% C

G2 Decepticon
Sigil with Pantone

DECEPTICON®

1990 Nameplate

THE TRANSFORMERS™ PRETENDERS™

Pretenders and Micromaster Logos

MICRO TRANSFORMERS

Decepticon Sigil
1988-1989

Decepticon Sigil
1990

TRANSFORMERS®

Decepticon Logo,
1988-1990

STAR CONVOY

After Victory there were a number of smaller toy lines, beginning with Zone. All featured Micromasters heavily.

ZONE & BEYOND CYBERTRONS

DAI ATLAS

ROADFIRE

SONIC BOMBER

GRANDUS

MICRO TRAILER #0
& SHOTBOMBER

SKY GARRY

BIG TRUCK TEAM

BIG HAULER

HOT ROD TEAM

GREASE

MILITARY TEAM

GROWL

SHUTTLE ROCKET W TEAM

PHASER & BLAST MASTER

FIRE TANKER W TEAM

WHEEL BLAZE & ROADBURNER

RADAR HOVER W TEAM

BARRAGE & HEAVE

DUMP SHOVEL W TEAM

SLEDGE & HAMMER

CRANE CANNON W TEAM

DIRECT-HIT & POWER PUNCH

JET TANK W TEAM

FIRESHOT & VANQUISH

RESCUE PATROL TEAM

HOLI

BATTLE PATROL TEAM

GUNLIFT

SUPER CAR PATROL TEAM

GINGHAM

SIXLINER

SIXWING

SIXTRAIN

SIXTURBO

SIXBUILDER

SKY HYPER
with DEADWHEELER

GUNLIFT

SUNRUNNER

POWERBOMB

SIDETRACK

BATTLE PATROL TEAM

GUARD CITY

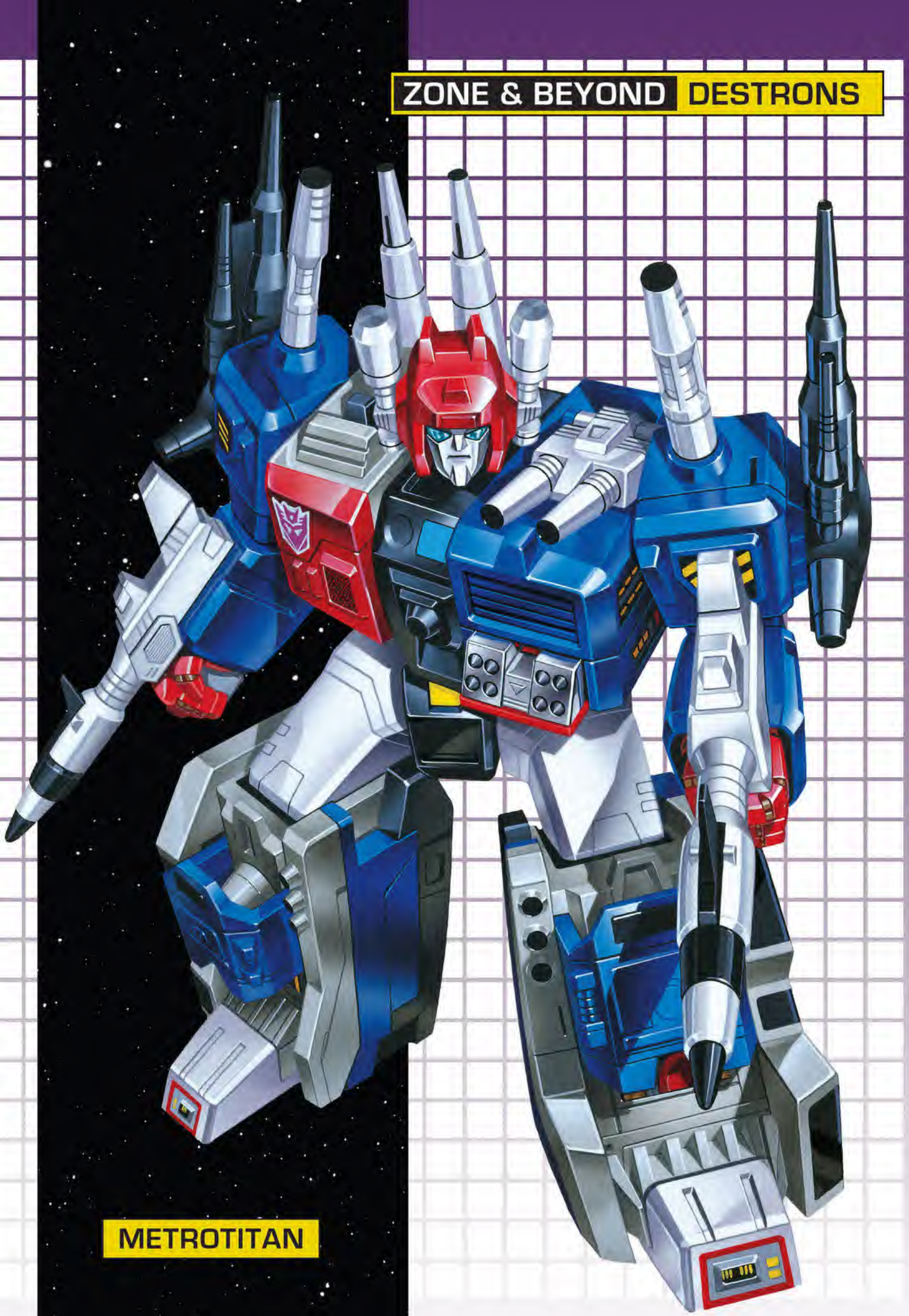
SUPER CAR PATROL TEAM

GINGHAM

ROAD HUGGER

BLACK HEAT

DEADHOUR



METROTITAN

BATTLE GAIA

Part Four: Generations

While The Transformers went on hiatus in the United States in 1991, it returned in 1993 as Generation 2. The backgrounds were modernized but the core art remained as it had been. Indeed, as much of the early Generation 2 line consisted of repaints of early Generation 1 toys, the artwork was often only a slight modification of the earlier illustrations. It was not until Beast Wars came along, in 1996, that the core artistic style in the U.S. would undergo a drastic shift. (Japanese aesthetics diverged from the U.S. in 1995, when they launched their version of Generation 2 with computer-generated visuals. While these are out of scope for this volume, you can get a hint of them by looking at the two-page spread that introduces our chapter on Generation 2 on page 224.)

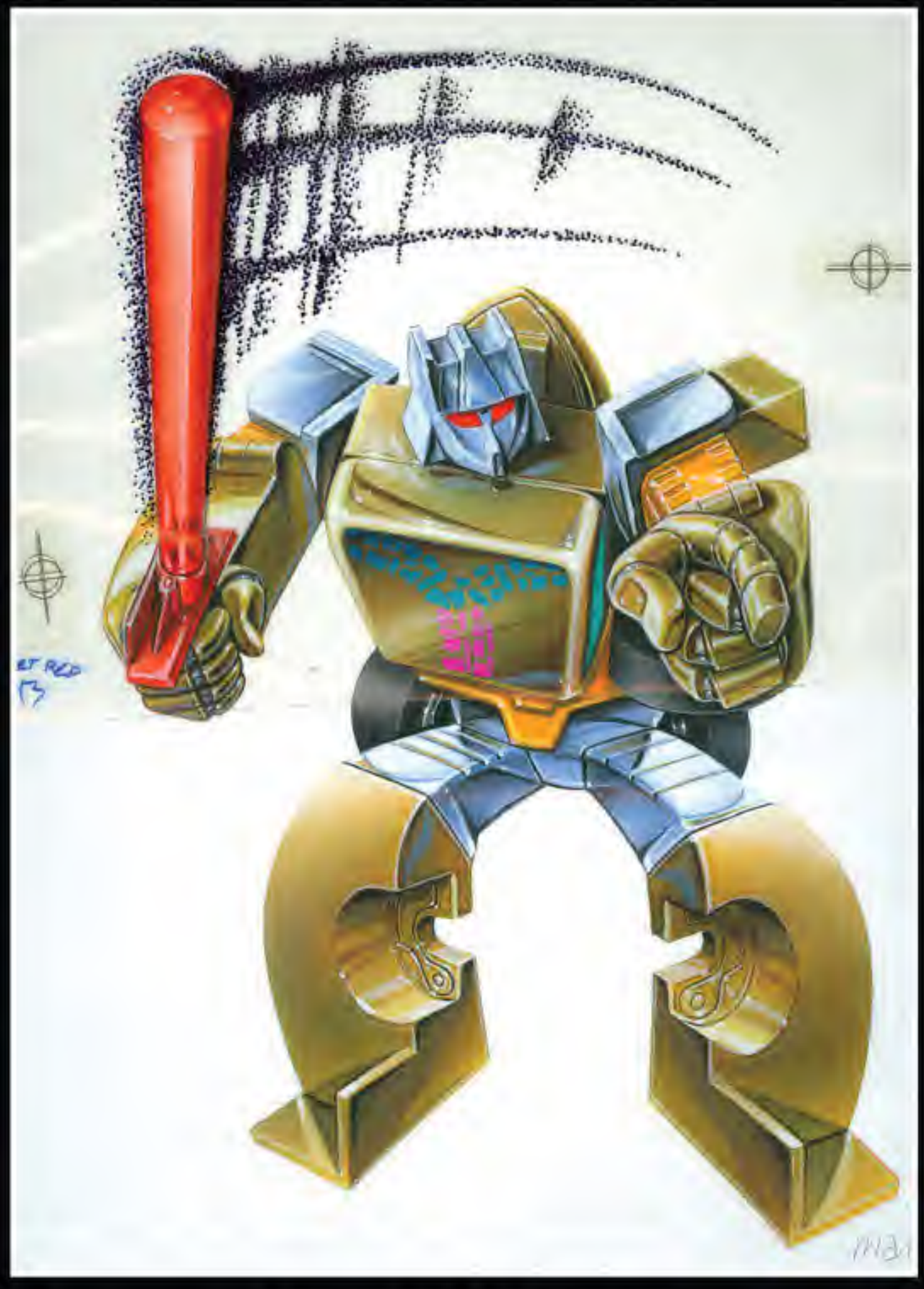
Chapter Twelve covers all of Generation 2, though we are missing a few repaints from the tail end of the line. G2, which ran from 1993-1995, launched with a series of redecoed versions of classic toys but quickly expanded to include new characters and features, many of which would inform future design choices for years to come. Toys had a greater range of articulation thanks to an increased use of ball-and-socket joints. Weapons could usually be stowed somewhere in vehicle modes, and light-piping made eyes appear to glow in direct sunlight.

Disappointing sales resulted in the cancellation of the 1996 line of Generation 2 in favor of a radically revamped line, the Beast Wars. This move would prove incredibly fortuitous to the brand, proving that the core concept was robust enough to cover a vastly different style of toy. This naturally required a different artistic style, and thus provides a logical stopping point for this book. (Heck, it's already almost 300 pages!)

However, we're not quite done. Chapter Thirteen covers unused art, much of which came from toys developed for but unproduced in Generation 2. We were fortunate enough to uncover some new artwork from Generation 1 as well, providing insight into toys considered but ultimately rejected by Hasbro. It's incredible to think of the toys that might have been, or even just to contemplate that at one point someone like Quickswitch was slated to be a Decepticon.

We conclude with Chapter Fourteen: oddities. There was much artwork produced in the airbrushed style that simply didn't fit into our organizational scheme. We provide a sampling of some of the Diaclone and Micro Change artwork that inspired the aesthetic of Transformers packaging artwork. We look at modern uses of this style. We touch on the use of this style in the United Kingdom from 1991-1995. We include some catalog art and some back-of-the-package spreads. It's fascinating how much artwork exists in this style, and we had fun covering a few of the more unusual instances of it.

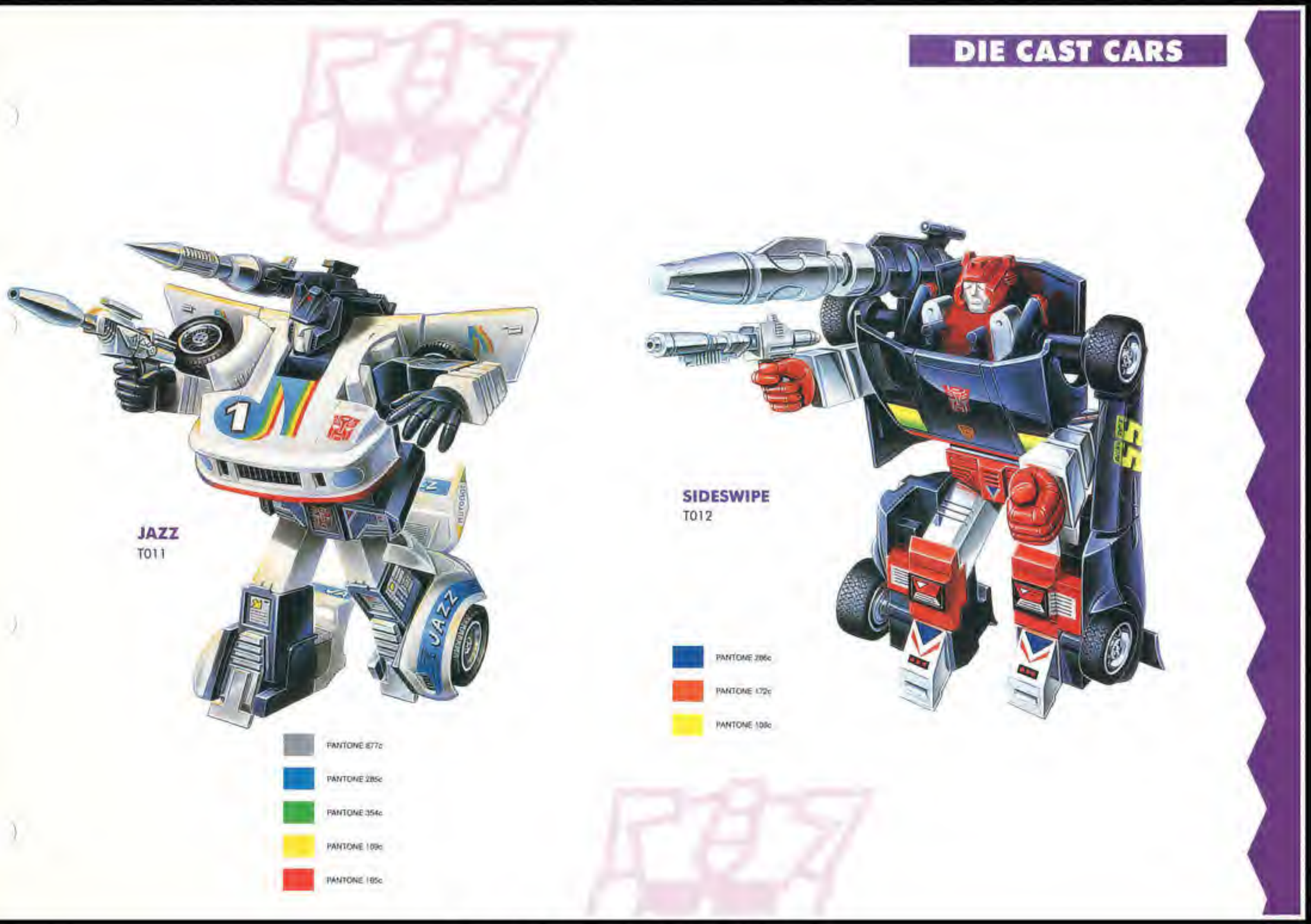
Unreleased Generation 2 Breakdown
(BotCon 1994 Exclusive Toy)



Electro with FX Overlay

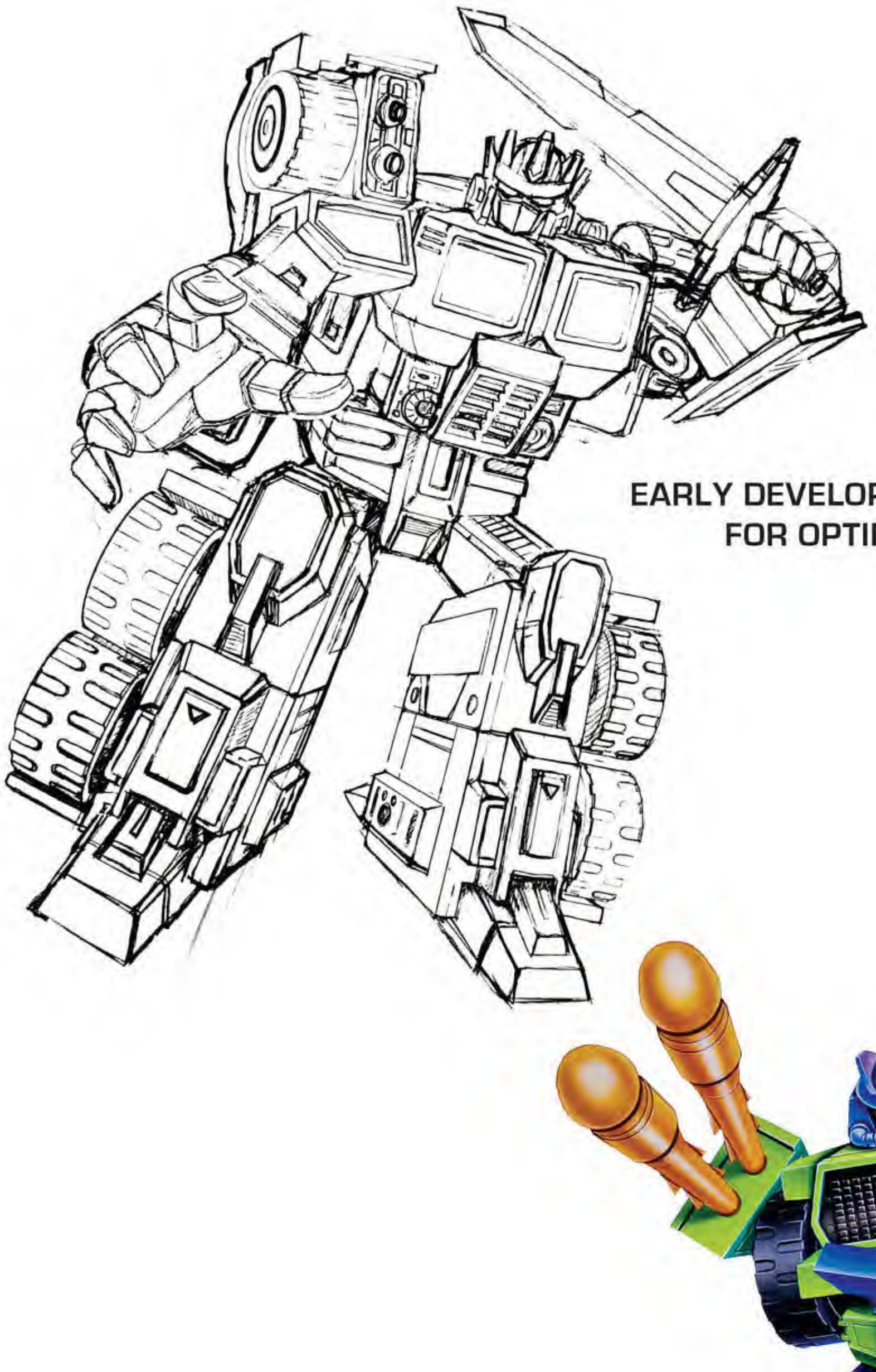
G2 Megatron Sketch

Generation 2 Gobots Production Proof Card



Generation 2 Style Guide Page

1995 JAPANESE GENERATION 2
CATALOG ARTWORK



EARLY DEVELOPMENT DRAWING
FOR OPTIMUS PRIME

DIRTBAG

GENERATION 2 AUTOBOTS

JAZZ

SIDESWIPE

INFERNO

Transformers returned to U.S. toy shelves in 1993 with Generation 2. Though the line began as mostly recolors of existing toys, it soon expanded to have its own identity.

TURBOFIRE

RAPIDO

SKRAM

WINDBREAKER

BUMBLEBEE

HUBCAP

SEASPRAY

BEACHCOMBER

LEADFOOT

MANTA RAY

ELECTRO

VOLT

LASER

OPTIMUS PRIME

AERIALBOTS

FIREFLIGHT

AIR RAID

SILVERBOLT

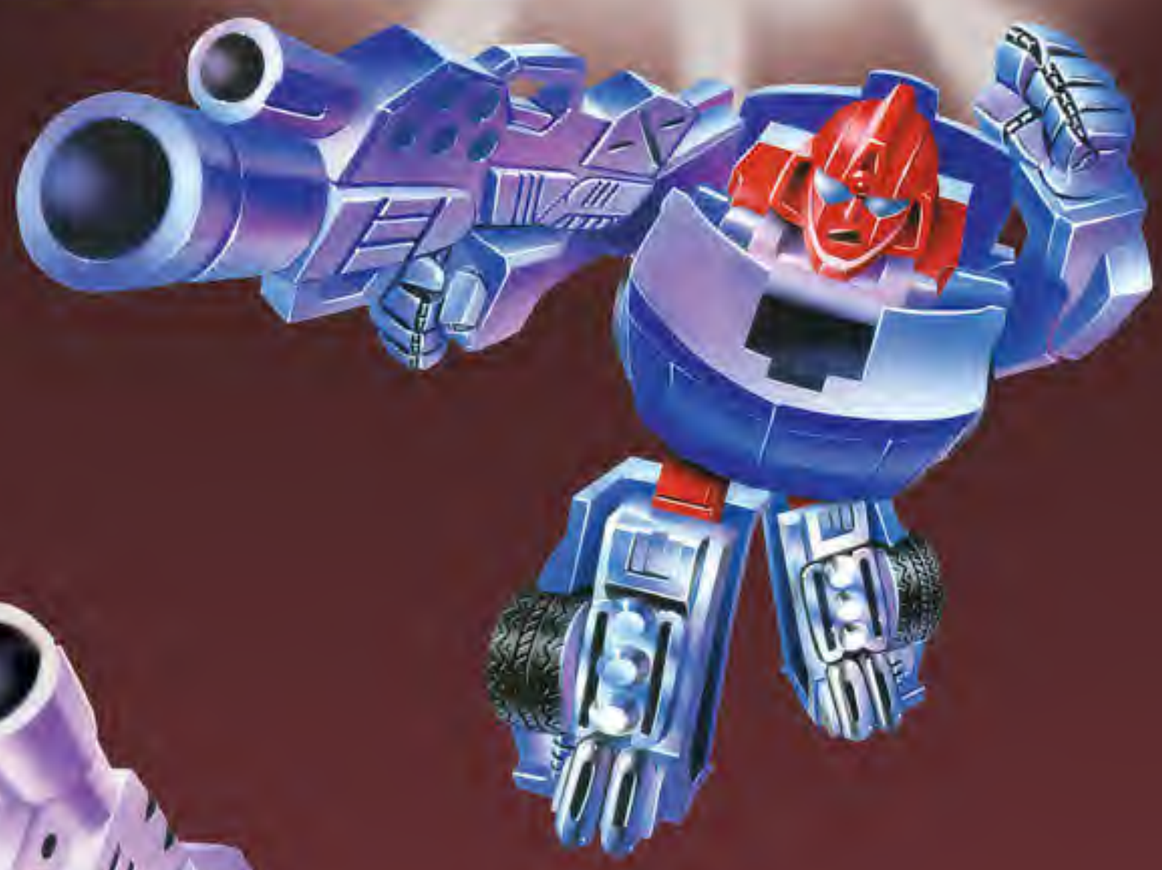
SKYDIVE

SLINGSHOT

FIRECRACKER

HIGH BEAM

MOTORMOUTH



BLOWOUT

GEARHEAD

DOUBLE CLUTCH

DRENCH

GOBOTS

ROAD ROCKET

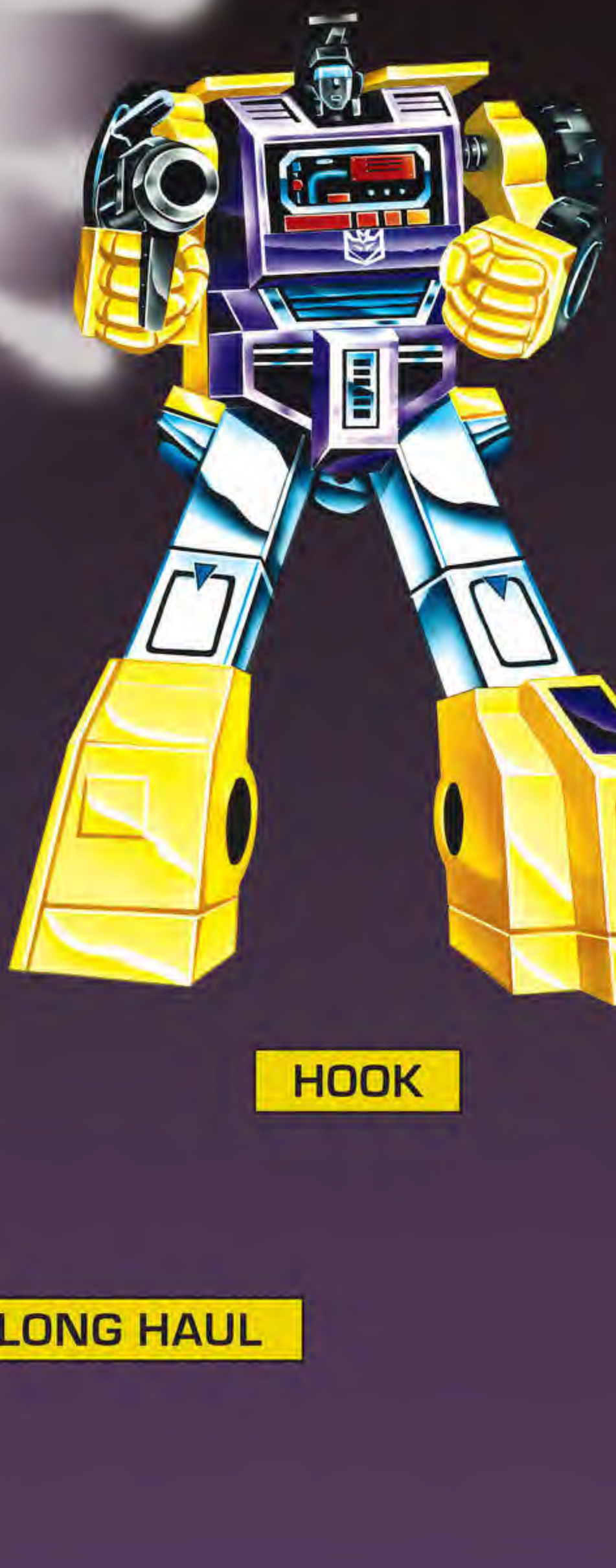
HERO

OPTIMUS PRIME

MEGATRON

GENERATION 2 DECEPTICONS

SCRAPPER



HOOK

LONG HAUL

MIXMASTER

SCAVENGER

BONECRUSHER

CONSTRUCTICONS

AFTERBURNER

EAGLE EYE

TERRADIVE

WINDRAZOR

HOOLIGAN

SKYJACK

SPACE CASE

DELUGE

JETSTORM

RANSACK

POWERDIVE

VORTEX

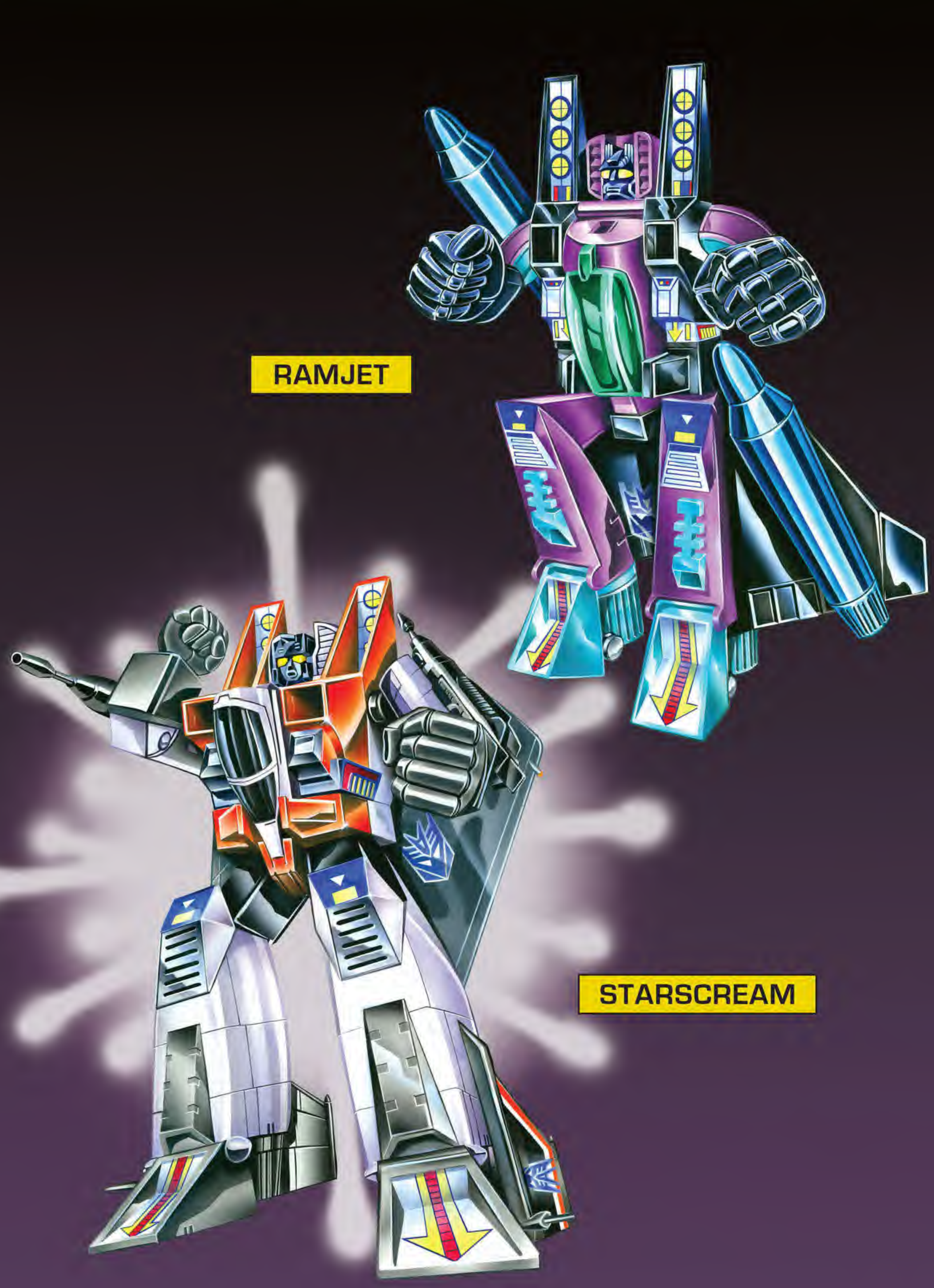
ONSLAUGHT

BLAST OFF

BRAWL

SWINDLE

COMBATICONS


RAMJET
STARSCREAM

DREADWING

SMOKESCREEN

SIZZLE

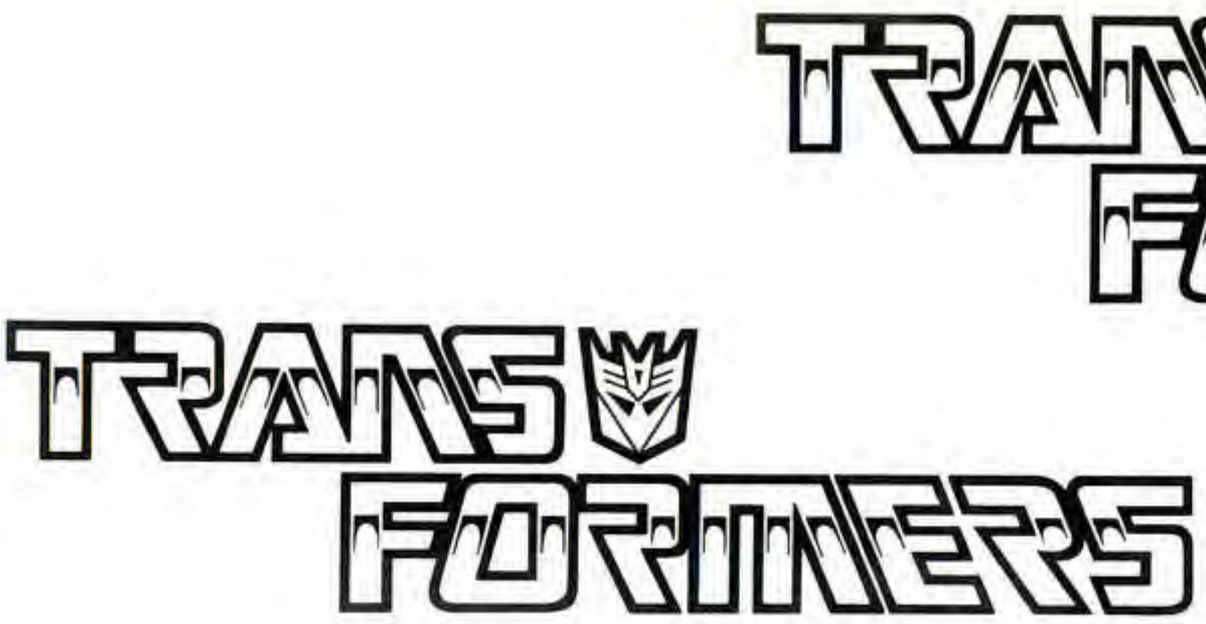
JOLT

HERO

MEGATRON

ROAD PIG

EARLY TAKARA CONCEPT ARTWORK



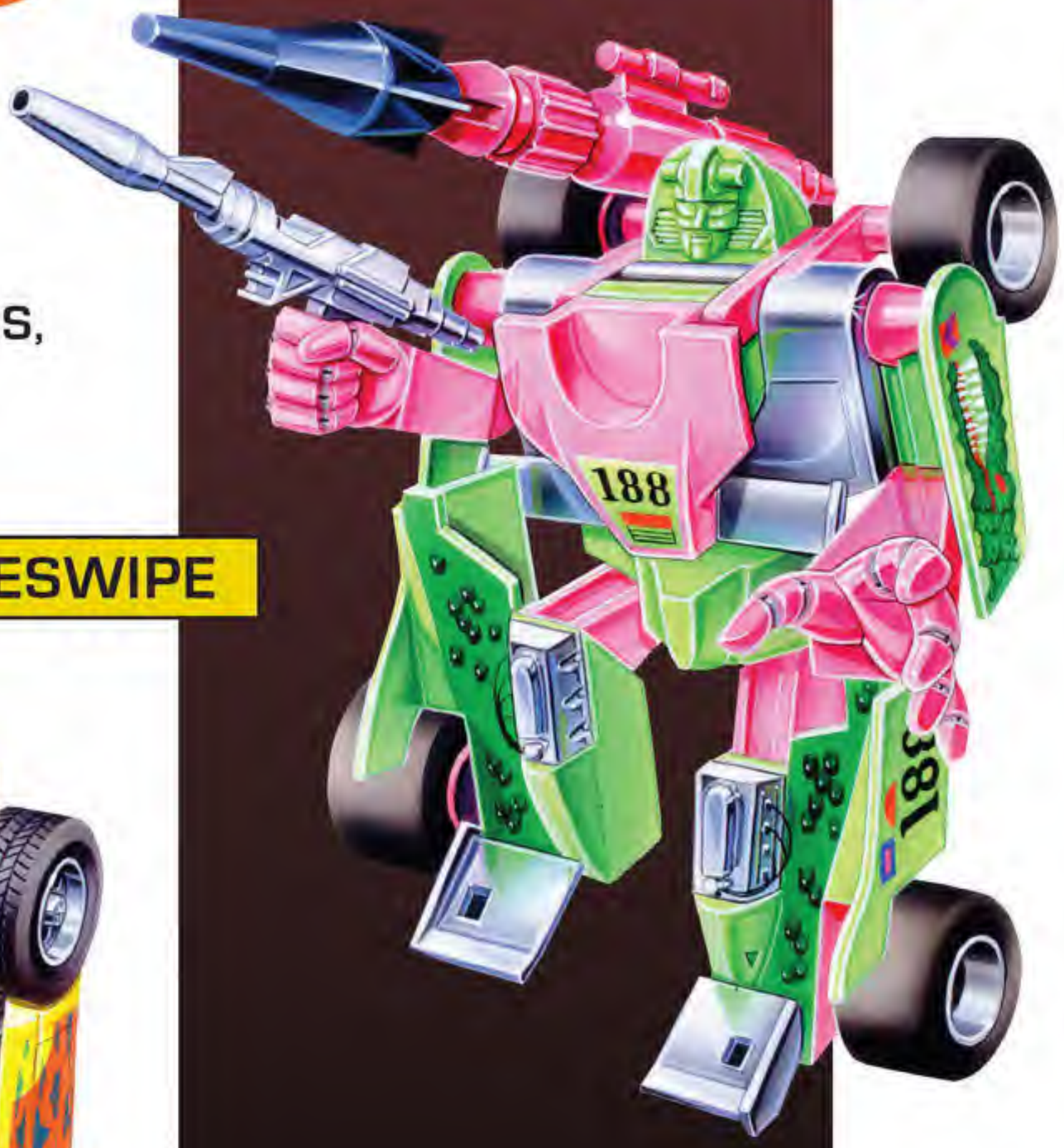
Unused Transformers Logos

UNUSED ARTWORK AUTOBOTS

JAZZ

UNRELEASED G2 DIACLONE CARS, WAVE 2

SIDESWIPE



MIRAGE

The art in this chapter is for toys that never were, or are variations that never saw the light of day.

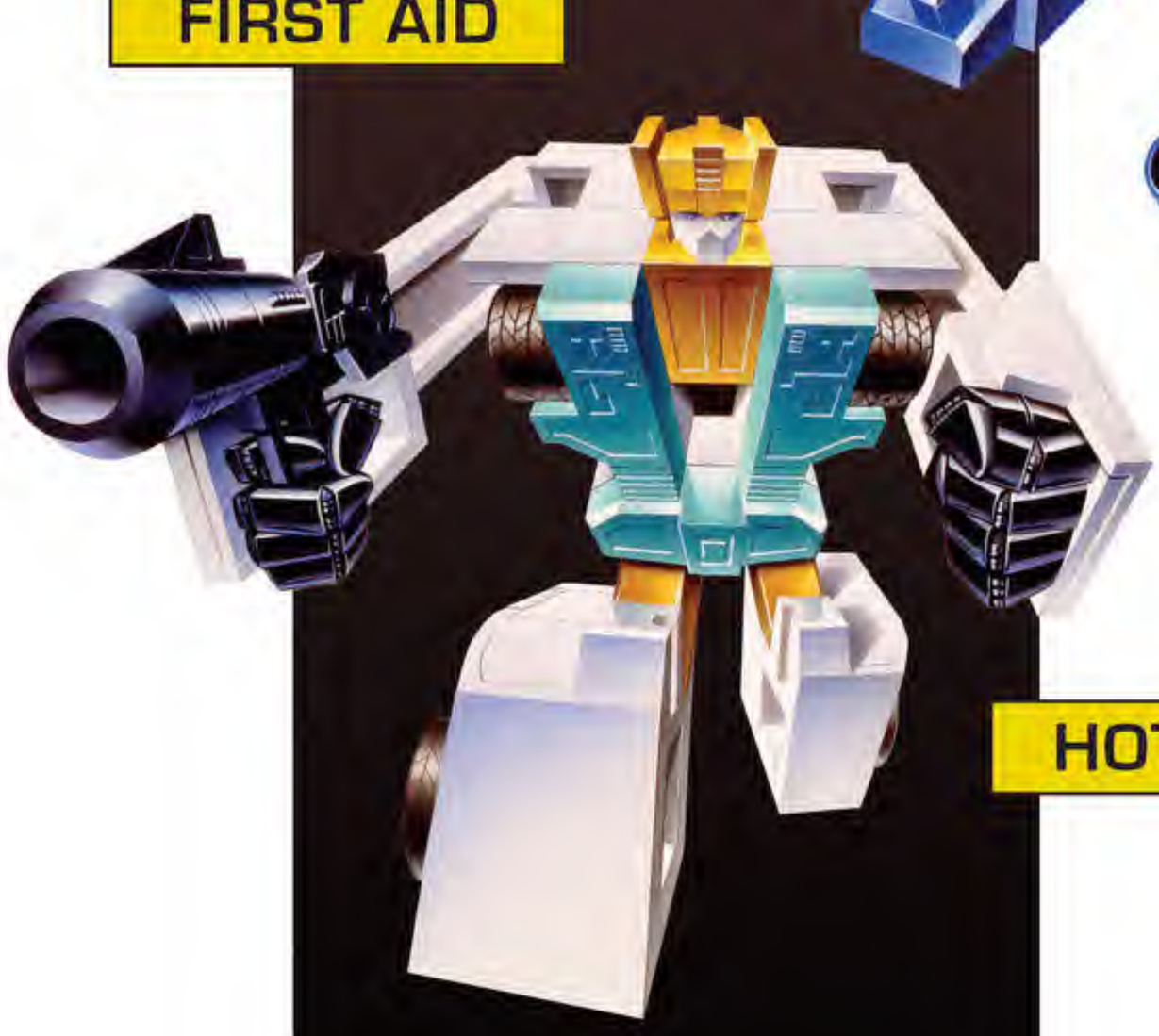
STREETWISE

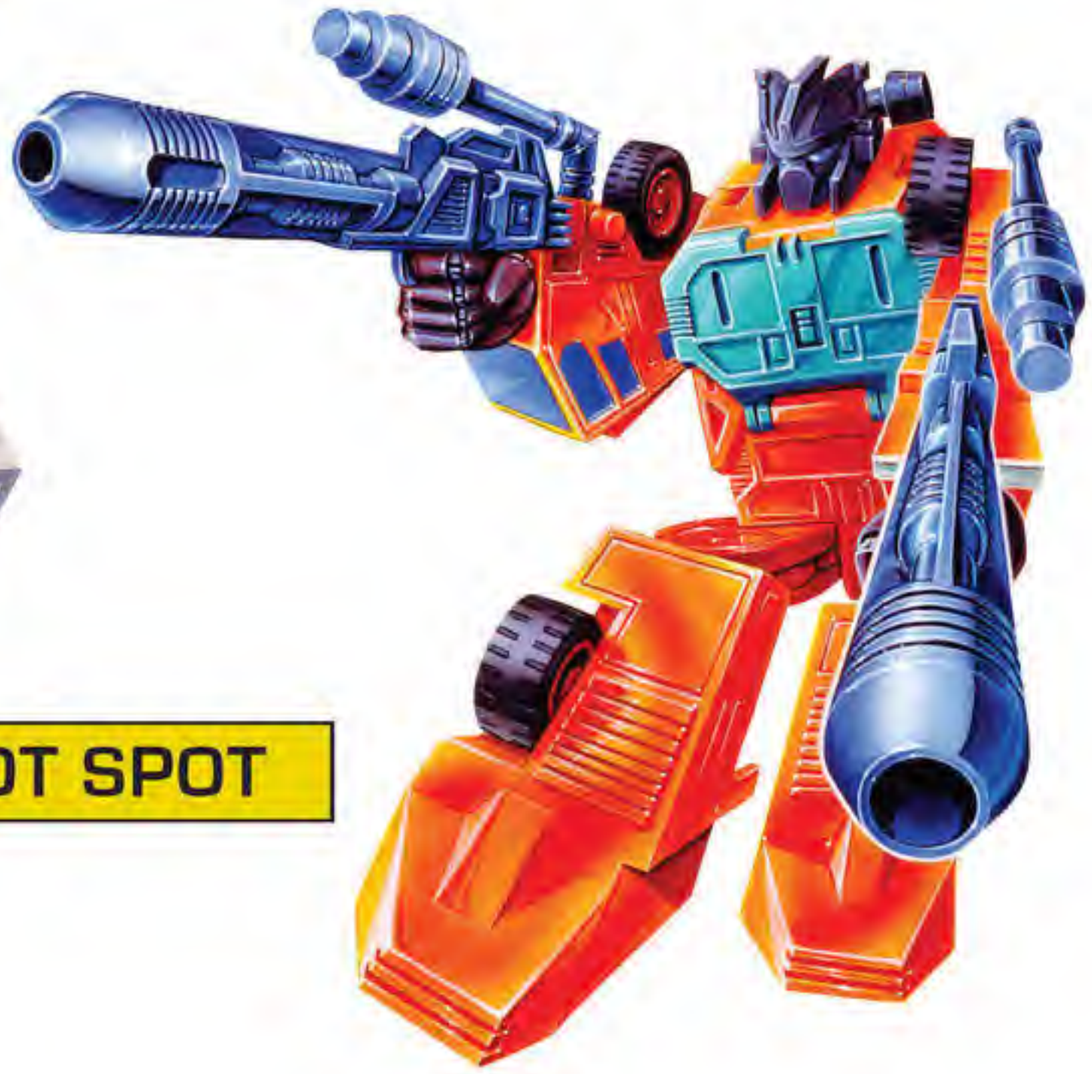
GROOVE

BLADES

UNRELEASED
G2 PROTECTOBOTS

FIRST AID





HOT SPOT

SLUDGE

GRIMLOCK

SWOOP

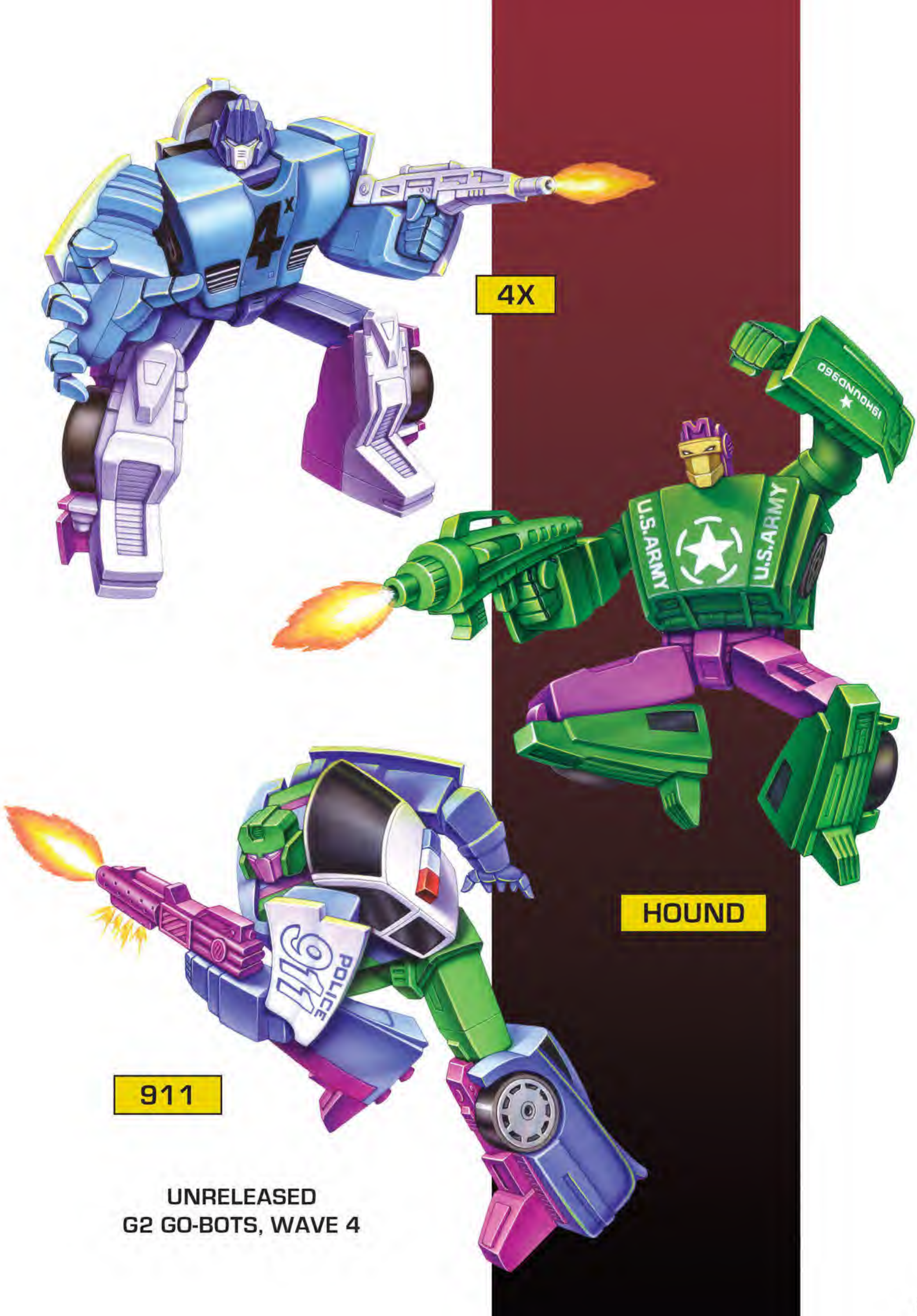
UNRELEASED
G2 DINOBOTS, WAVE 2

MACH

POTENTIAL
U.S. RELEASE OF MULTIFORCE

TACKLE

TACKER



UNRELEASED
G2 GO-BOTS, WAVE 4

FULL-BARREL

OVERFLOW

PARTIALLY USED
MICROMASTER BATTLEFIELD
HEADQUARTERS

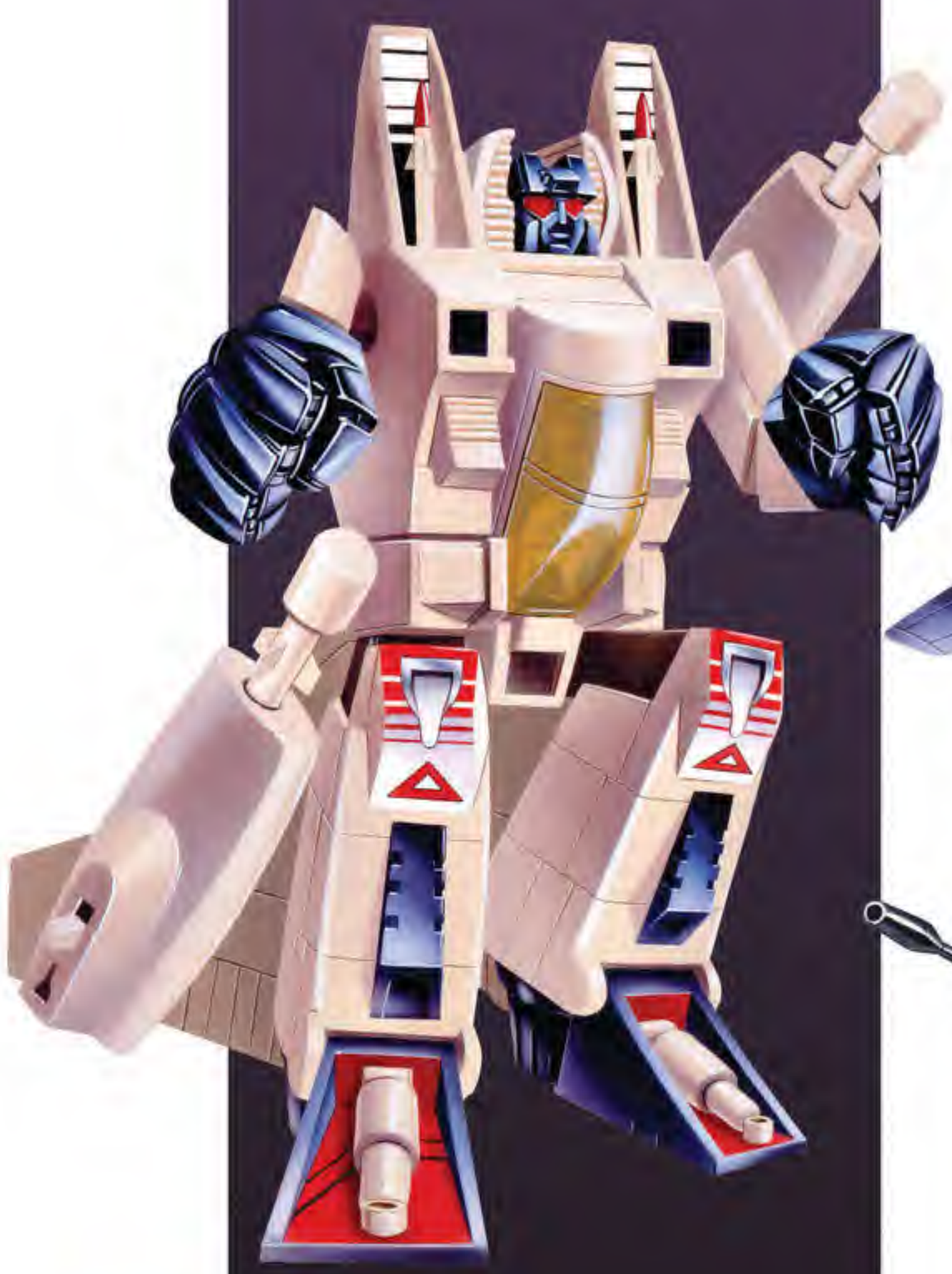
UNUSED ARTWORK DECEPTICONS

RUMBLE

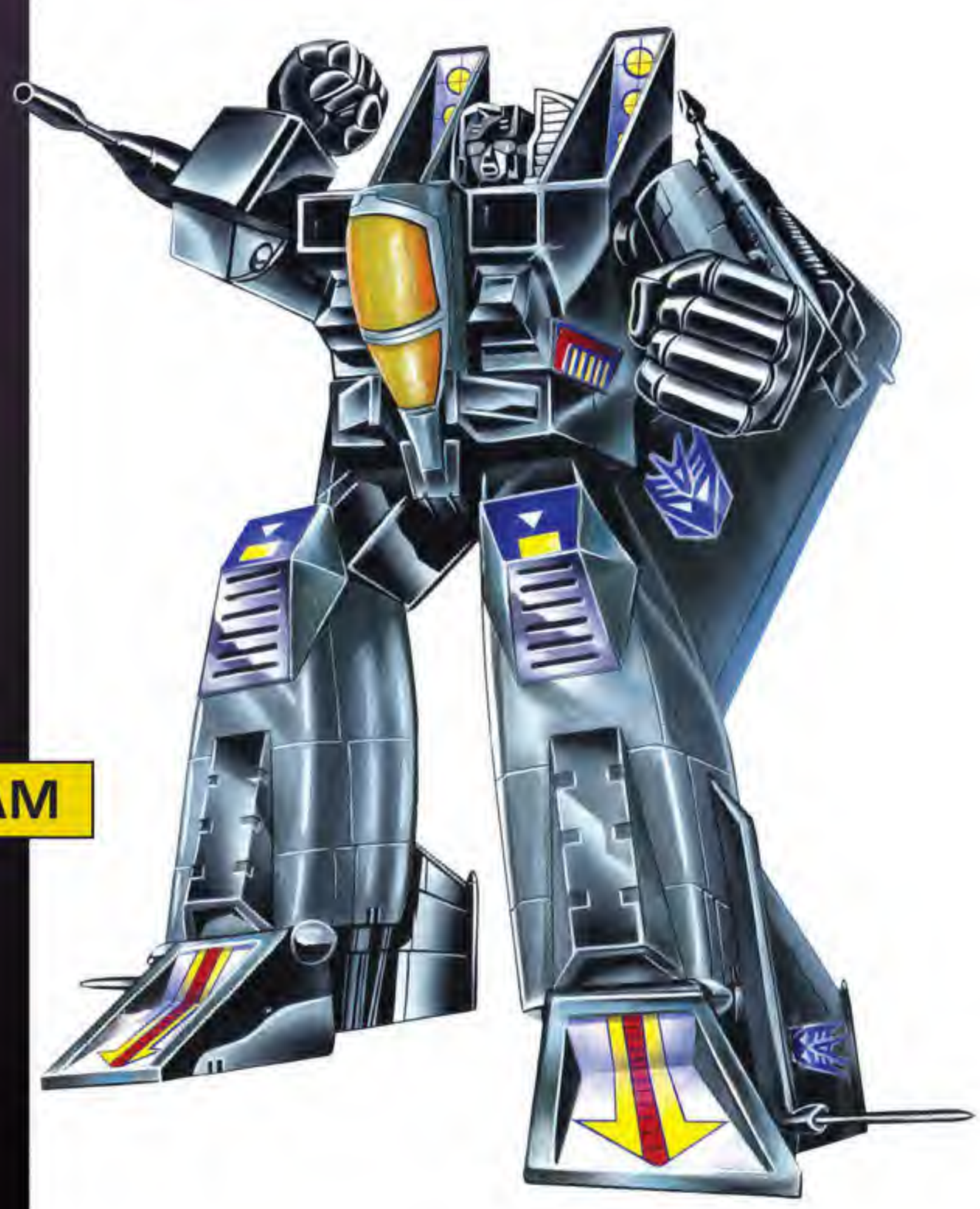
UNRELEASED GO-BOT RUMBLE AND MONSTRUCTOR GIFT SET

MONSTRUCTOR

STARSCREAM



SANDSTORM



STARSCREAM

UNRELEASED
G2 DIACLONE JETS,
WAVE 2

DIRGE

EARLY ARTWORK
FOR G1 JETS, WAVE 2

THRUST

RAMJET

UNRELEASED G2 STUNTICONS

DEAD END

MOTORMASTER

WILDRIDER

BREAKDOWN

DRAG STRIP

QUICKSWITCH
AS A DECEPTICON

QUICKSWITCH

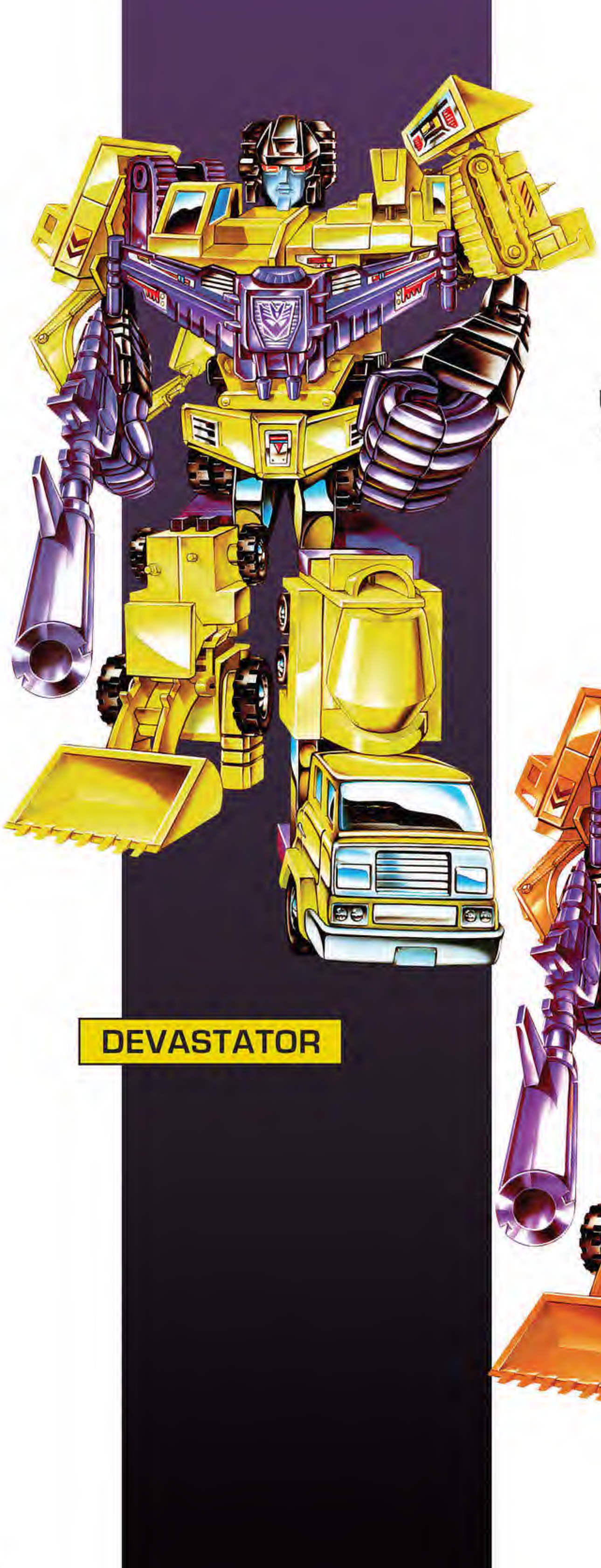
EARLY ARTWORK FOR
MICROMASTER
CONSTRUCTOR SQUAD

KNOCKOUT

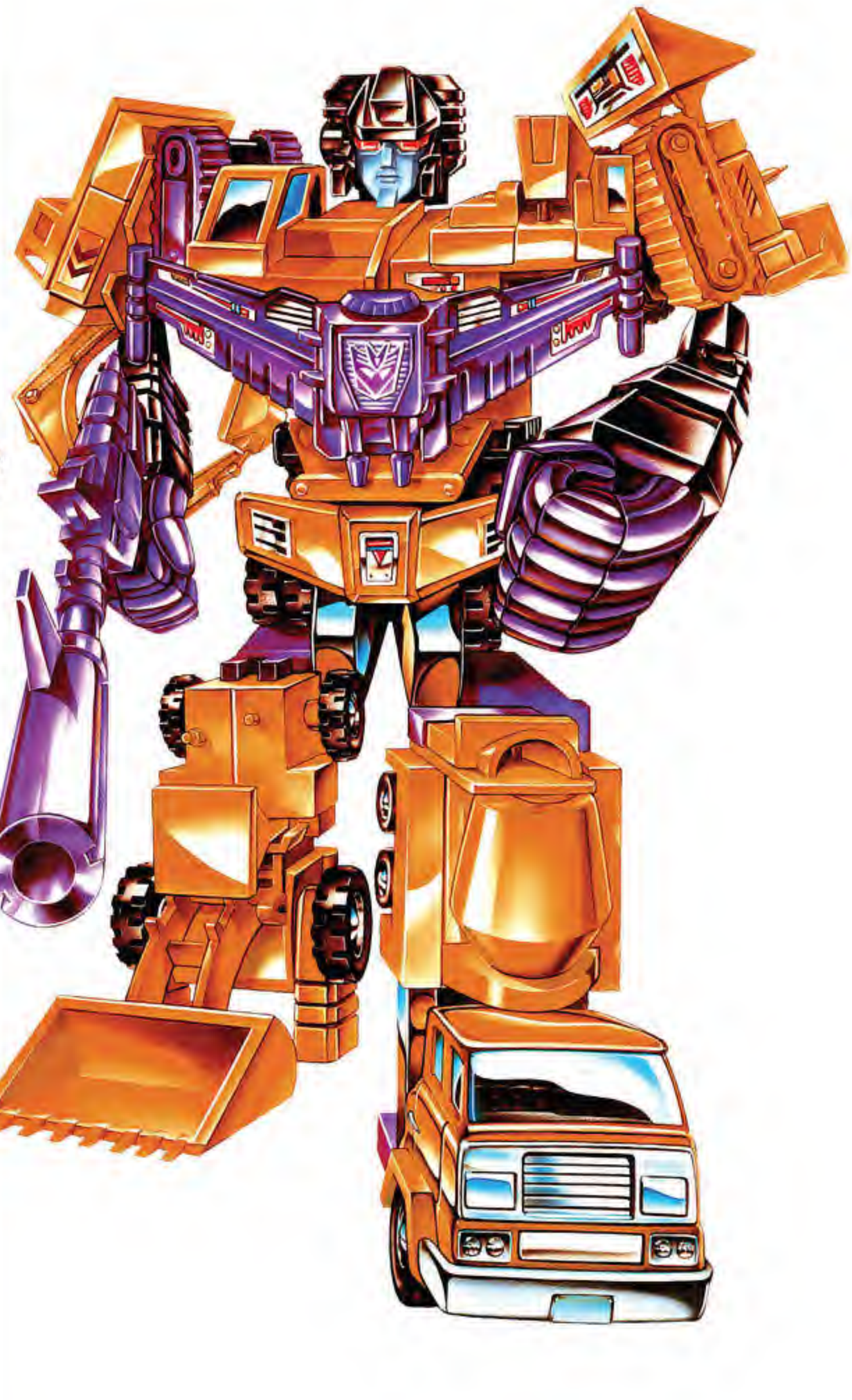
HAMMER

SLEDGE

STONE CRUNCHER



UNUSED DEVASTATORS FROM G2 CONSTRUCTICON BOX SET



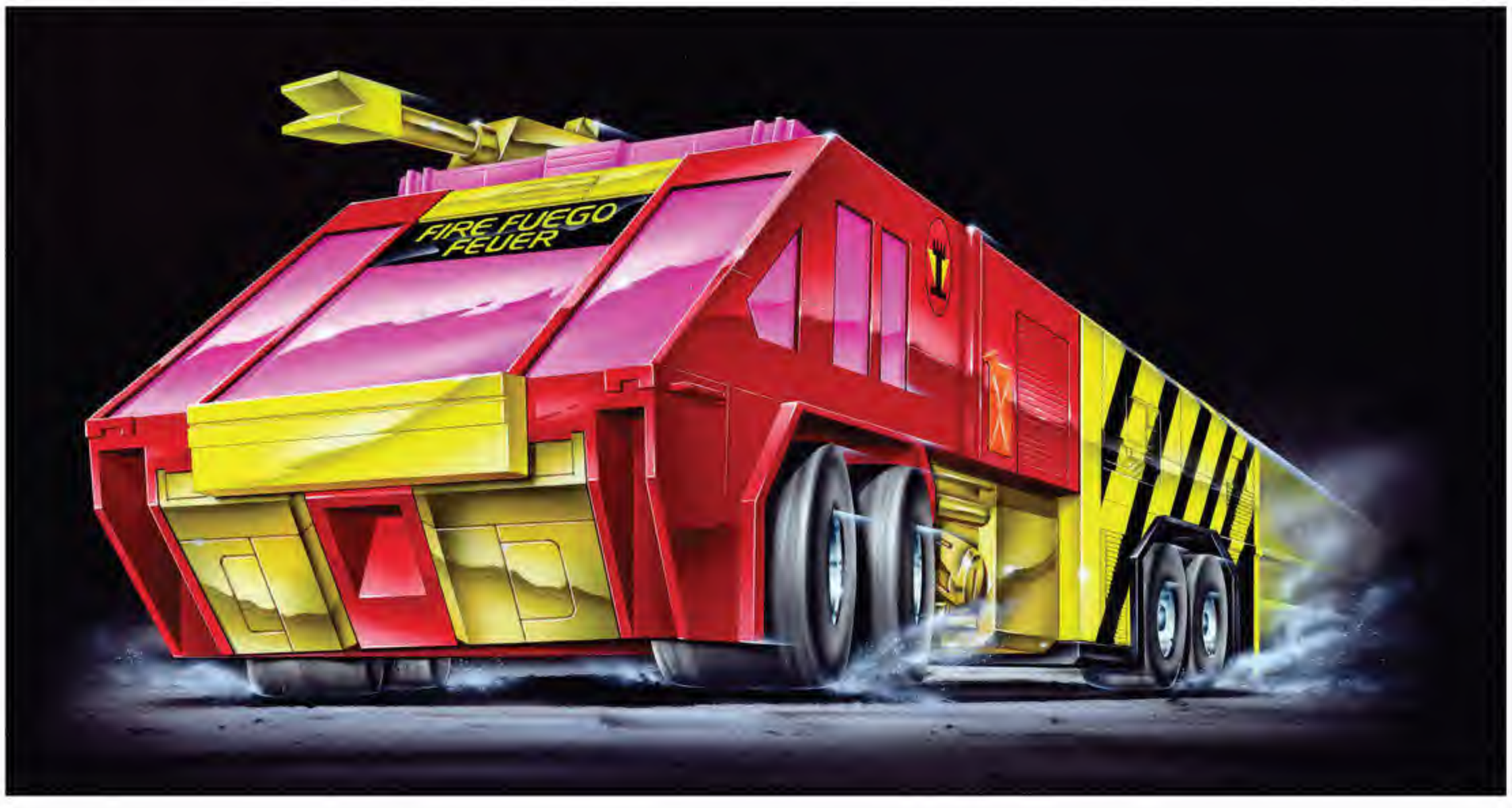
MEGATRON

STARSCREAM

EXTREMELY LIMITED RELEASE G2
A.T.B. (ADVANCED TACTICAL BOMBER)
MEGATRON WITH STARSCREAM

DIACLONE VS MICRO CHANGE
"EXCITING ROBOTS" PROPOSAL

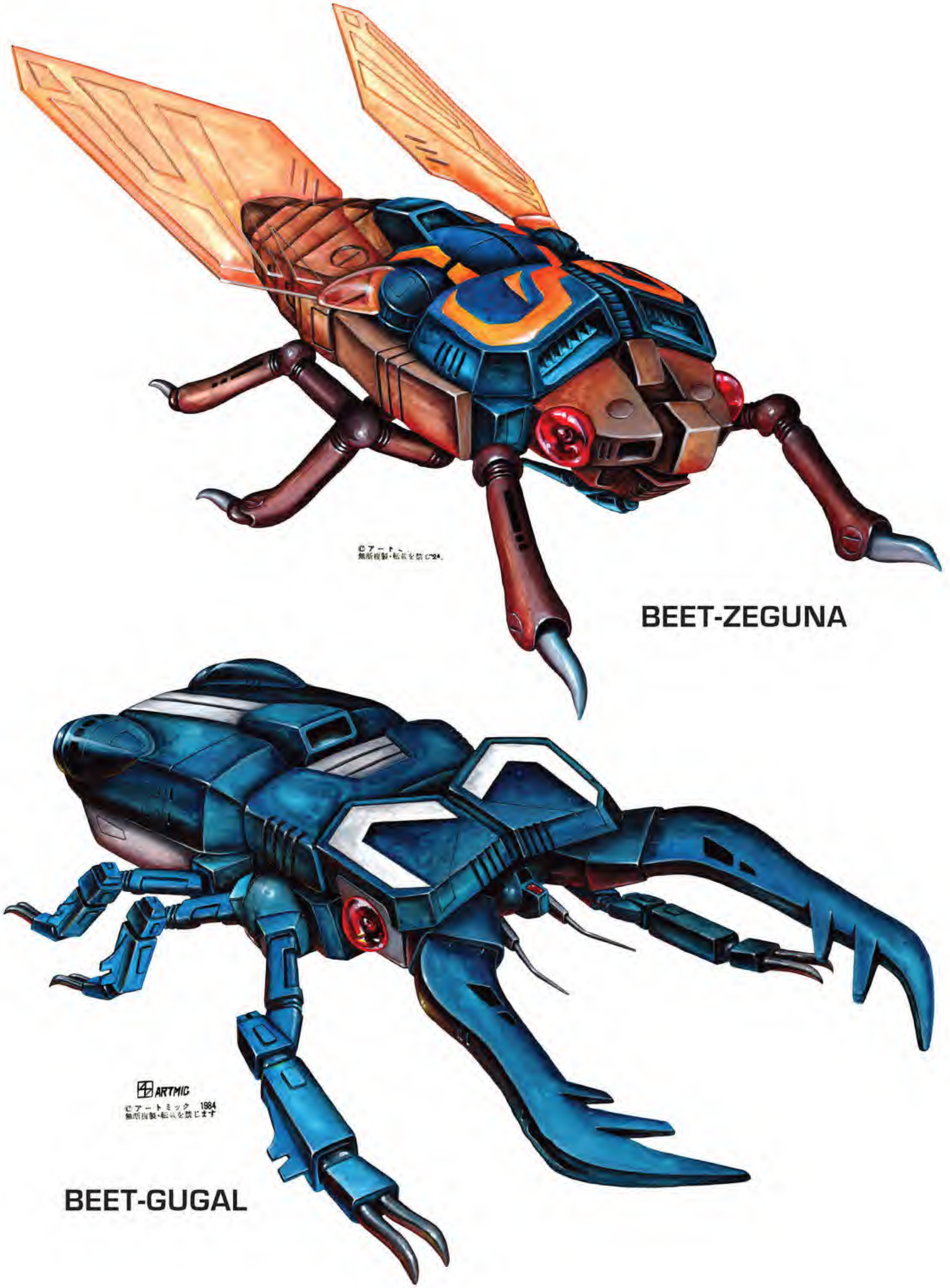
UNUSED ART FOR UK EXCLUSIVES
CLENCH & PYRO



MICRO CHANGE

DIACLONE

DIACLONE



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BEET-ZEGUNA

ARTMIC
©アートミック 1984
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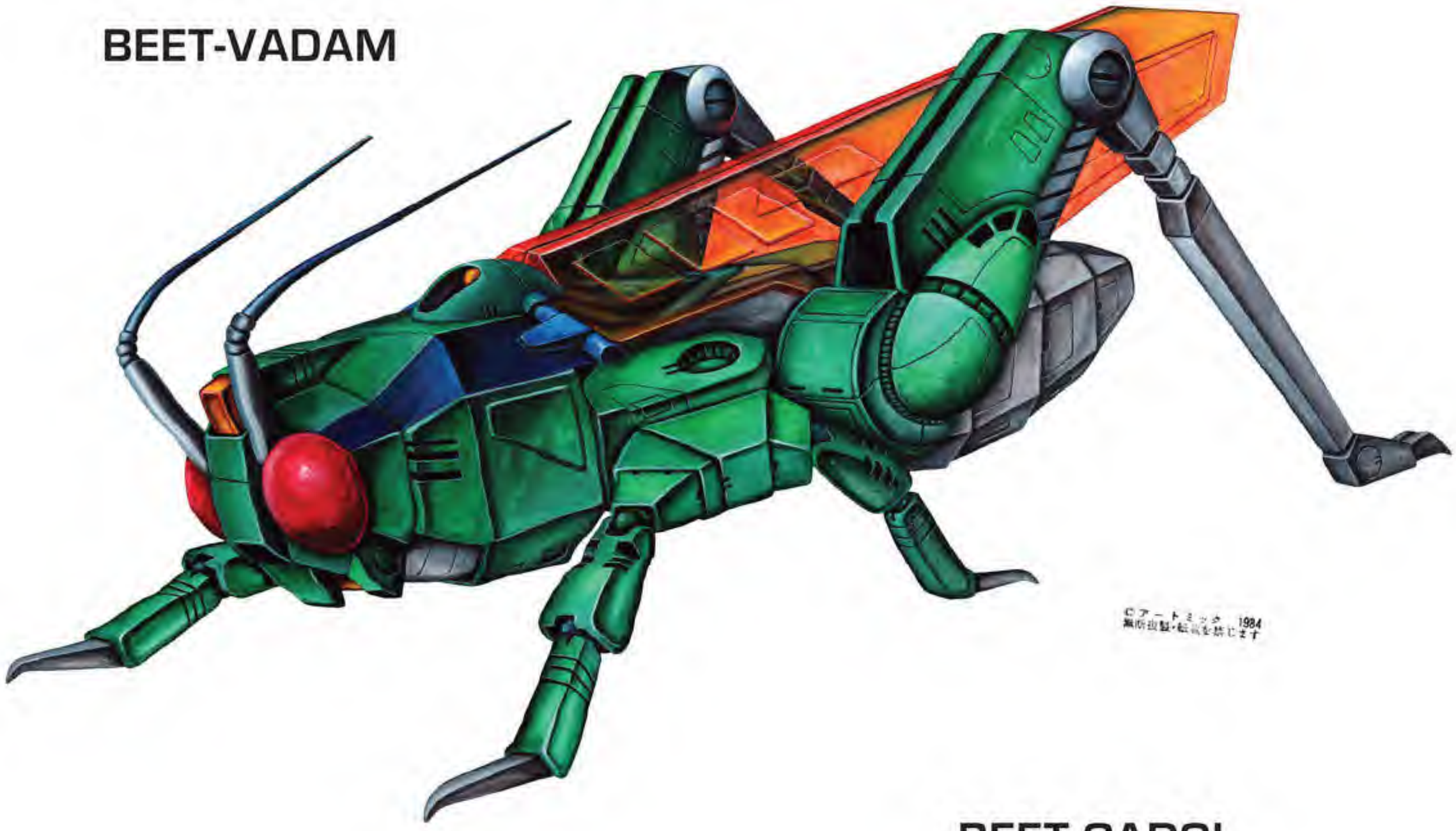
BEET-GUGAL

BEET-VADAM



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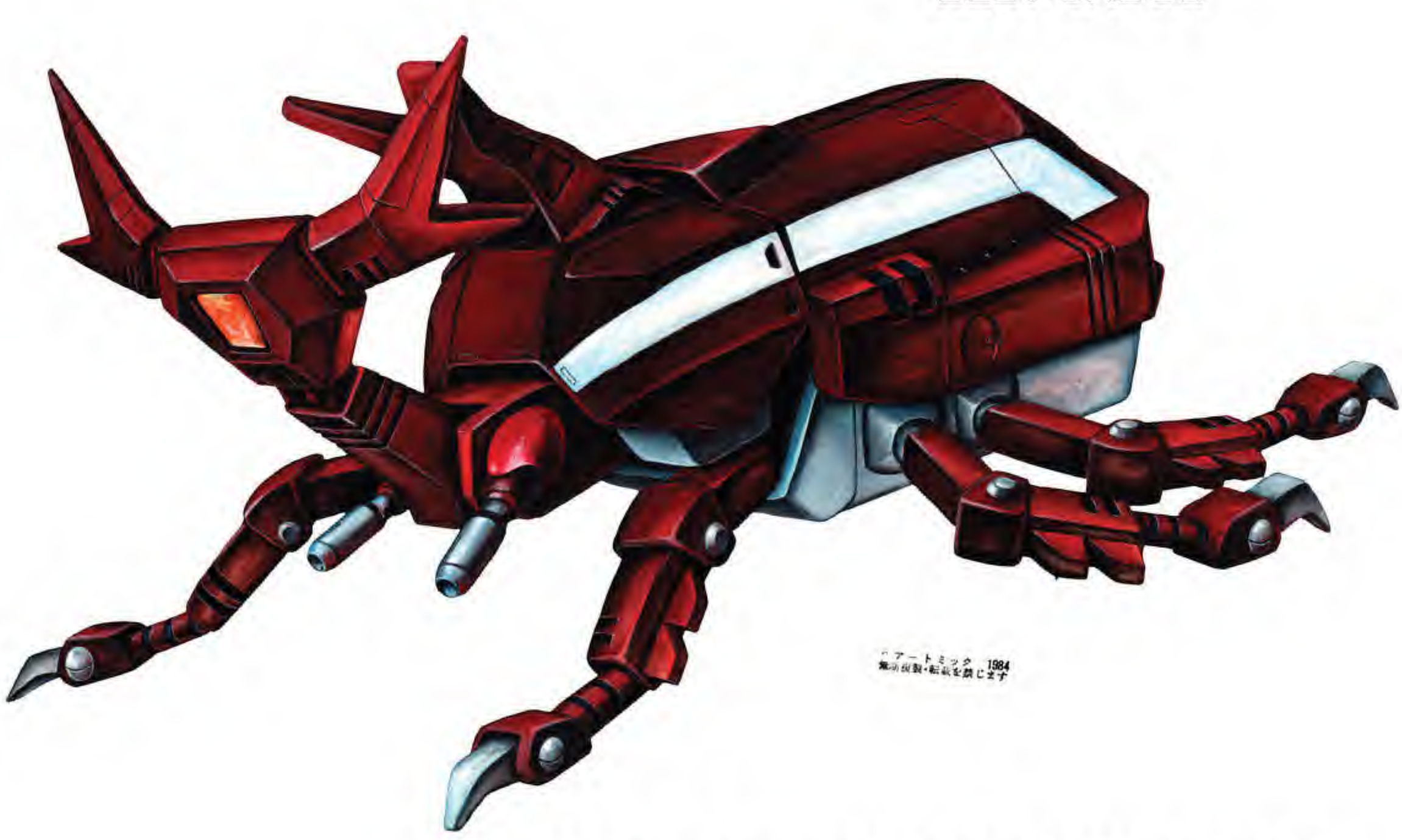
BEET-GADOL



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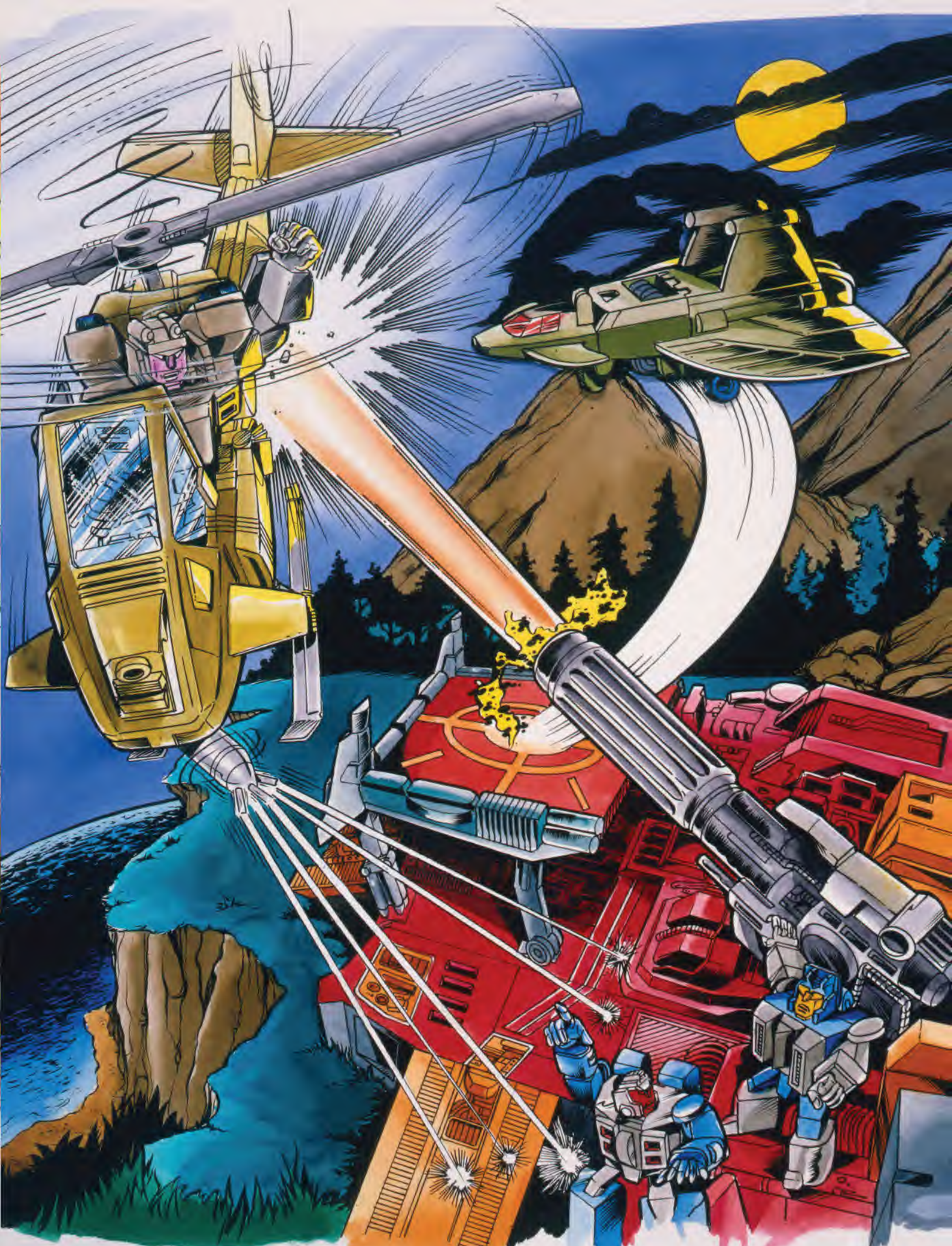
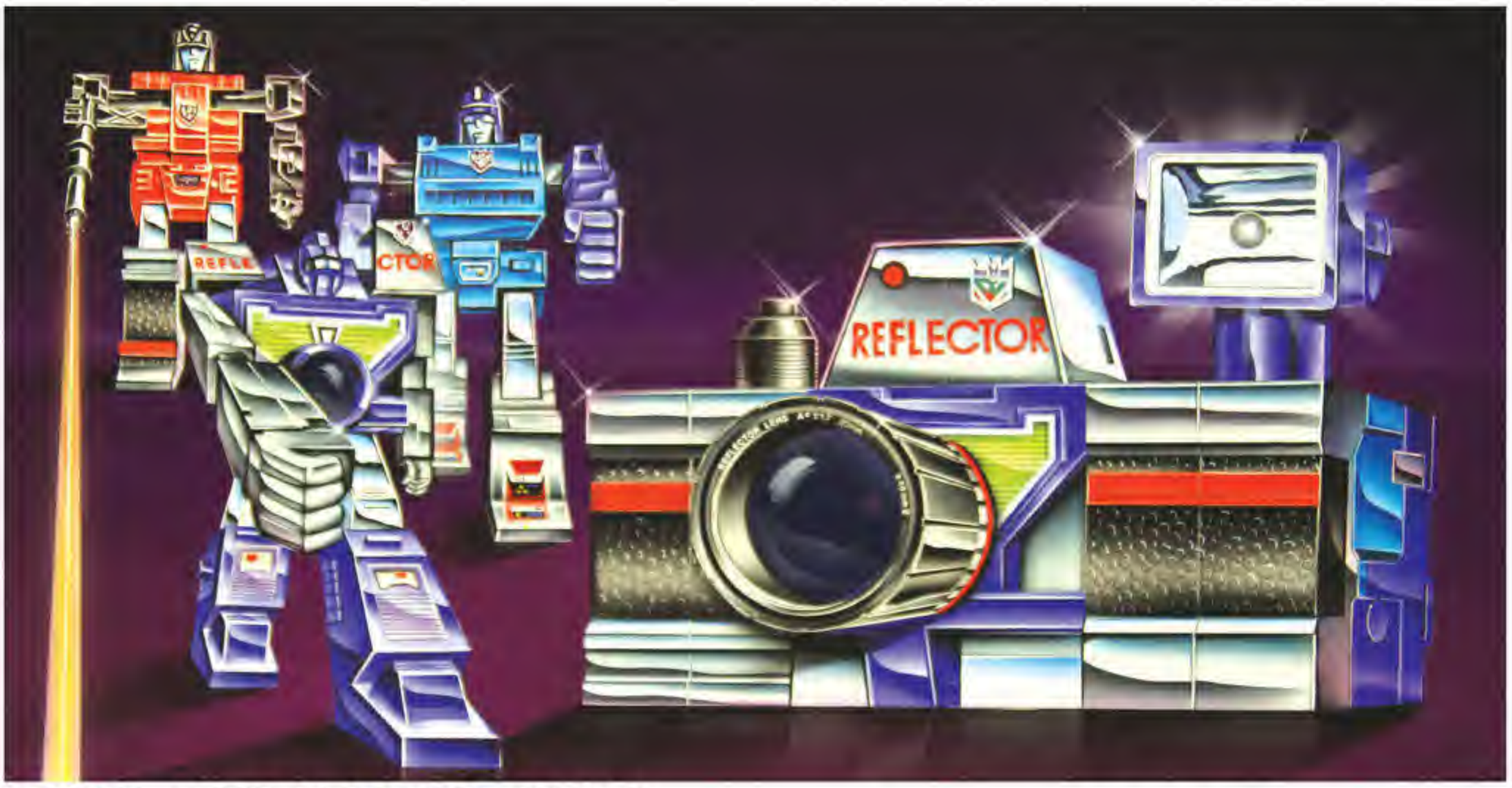
ARMORED INSECT BATTALION BEETRAS

ODDITIES 1989 PACKAGE BATTLE SCENES



1984 PACKAGE BACK

DIACLONE
F-1 LIGIER JS11



ABOVE: REFLECTOR (CATALOG)

BELOW: 1985 PACKAGE BACK

1986 PACKAGE BACK

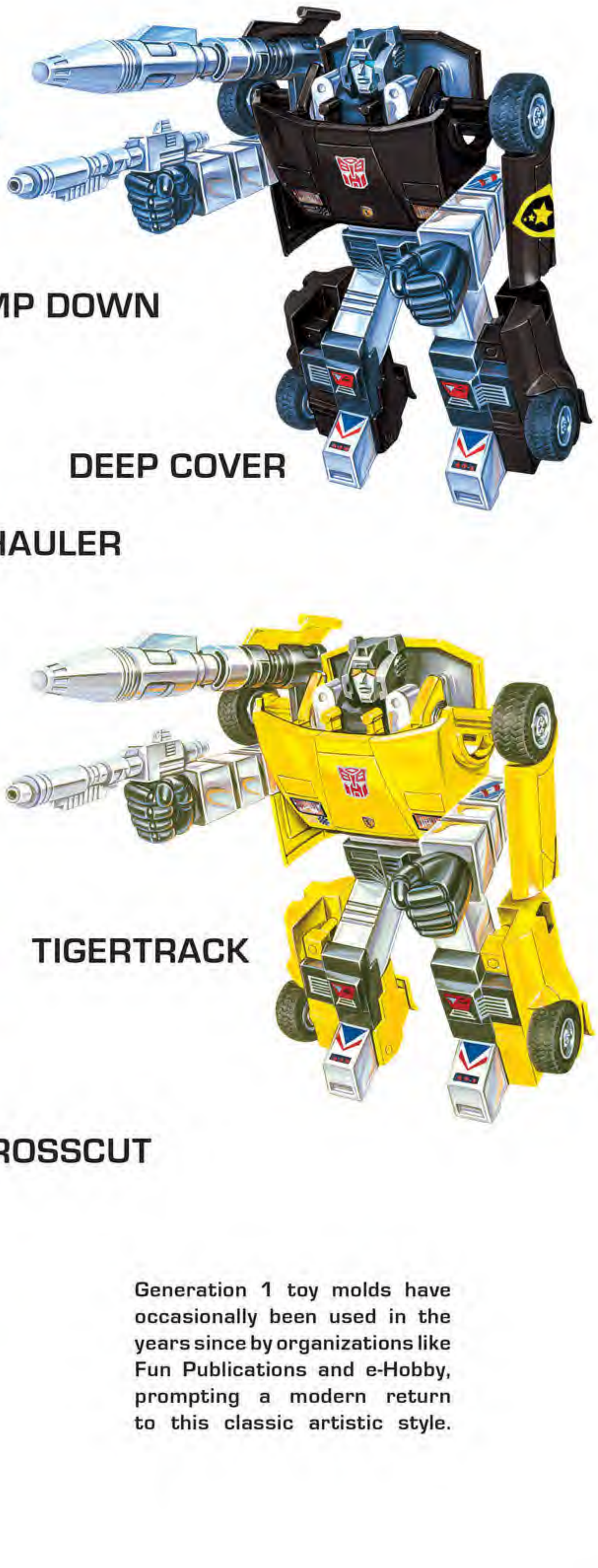
DIACLONE
NEW COUNTACH
LP500S

DIACLONE
PORSCHE 935 TURBO

COLORFORMS ARTWORK

FIRE GUTS GINRAI

CLAMP DOWN



DEEP COVER

ROADHAULER

TIGERTRACK

CROSSCUT

Generation 1 toy molds have occasionally been used in the years since by organizations like Fun Publications and e-Hobby, prompting a modern return to this classic artistic style.

NUCLEON QUEST CONVOY

HOWLBACK

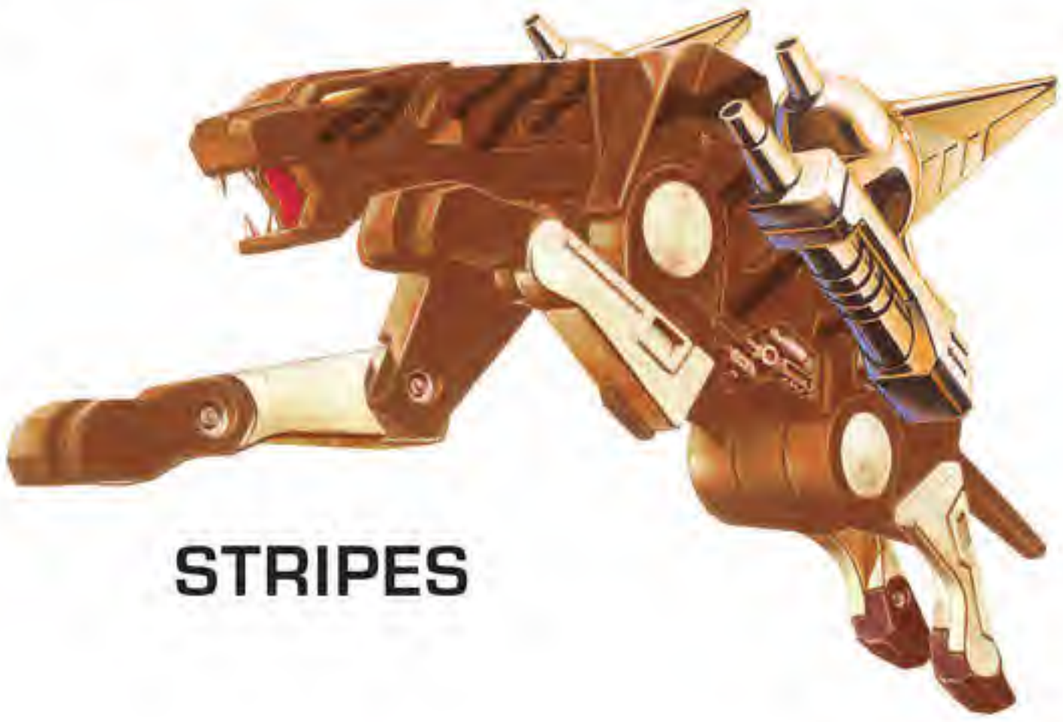
GARBOIL

WINGTHING

ENEMY

NIGHTSTALKER

FLIP SIDES



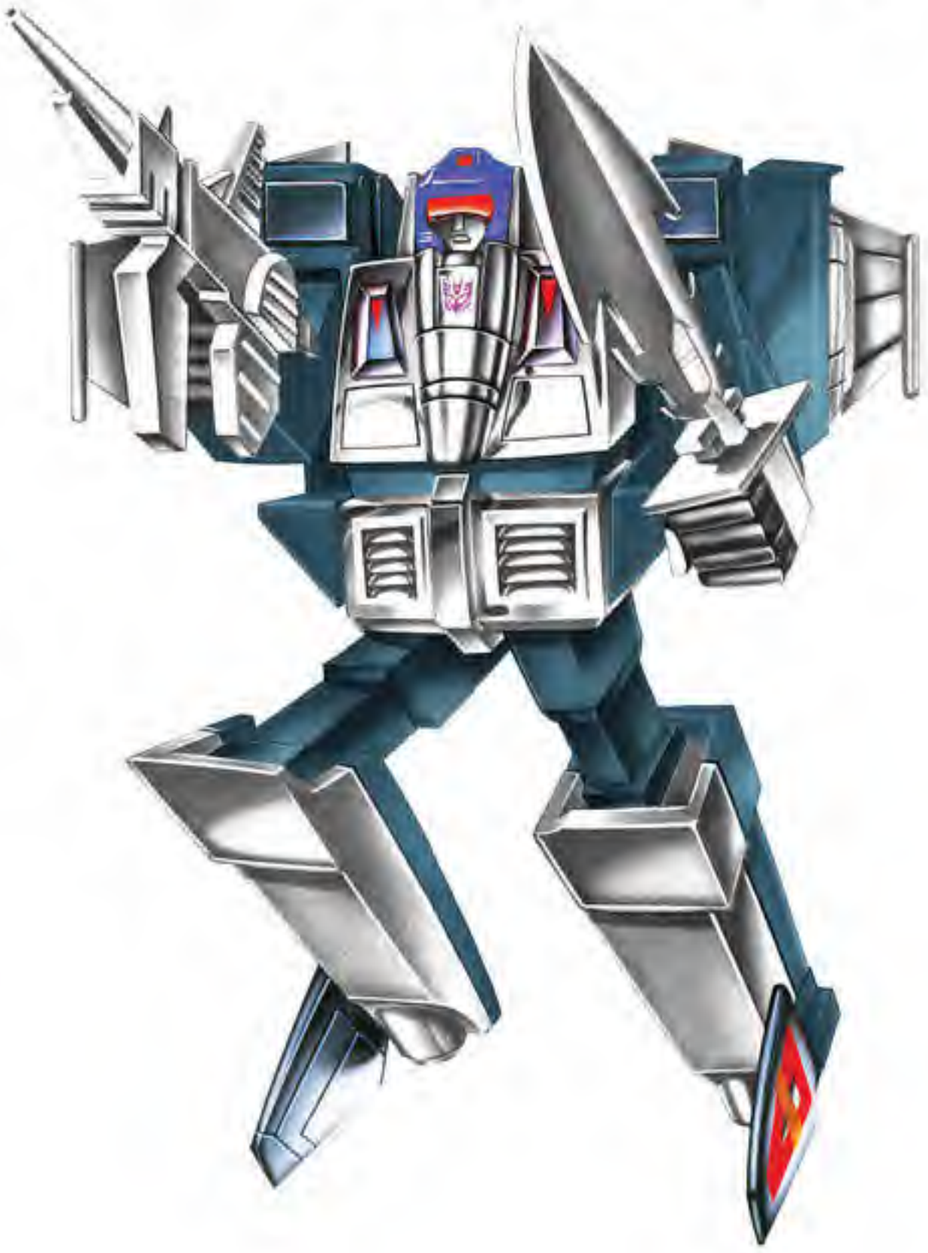
STRIPES

MAGNIFICUS

GA'MEDE

NIGHTRACER (VARIANT)

SUNSTORM



OVERCHARGE

SEACONS (ENERGON PIRANACONS DECO)

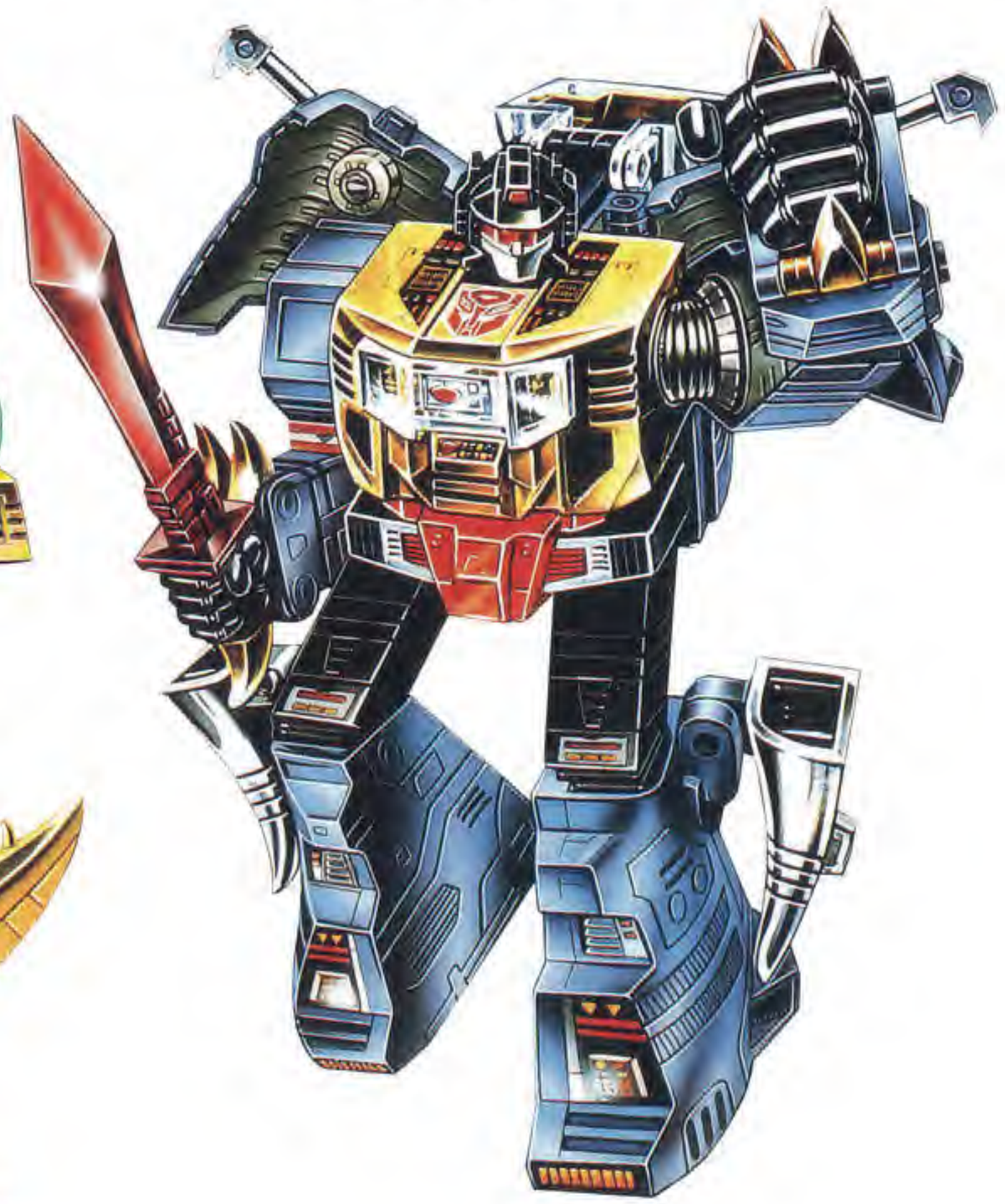
RETURN OF CONVOY
PACKAGE BACK (ALTERNATE)

JAPANESE EXCLUSIVE
DEFEAT TRYPTICON
STRATEGY GAME COVER

ODDITIES UK EXCLUSIVES

SLAG

GRIMLOCK



SNARL

Shortly after Generation 1 ended, and through the end of Generation 2, Hasbro UK produced several exclusive toys, and sometimes used variant artwork from toys that did have a U.S. release. Here are just a few of the pieces they produced.

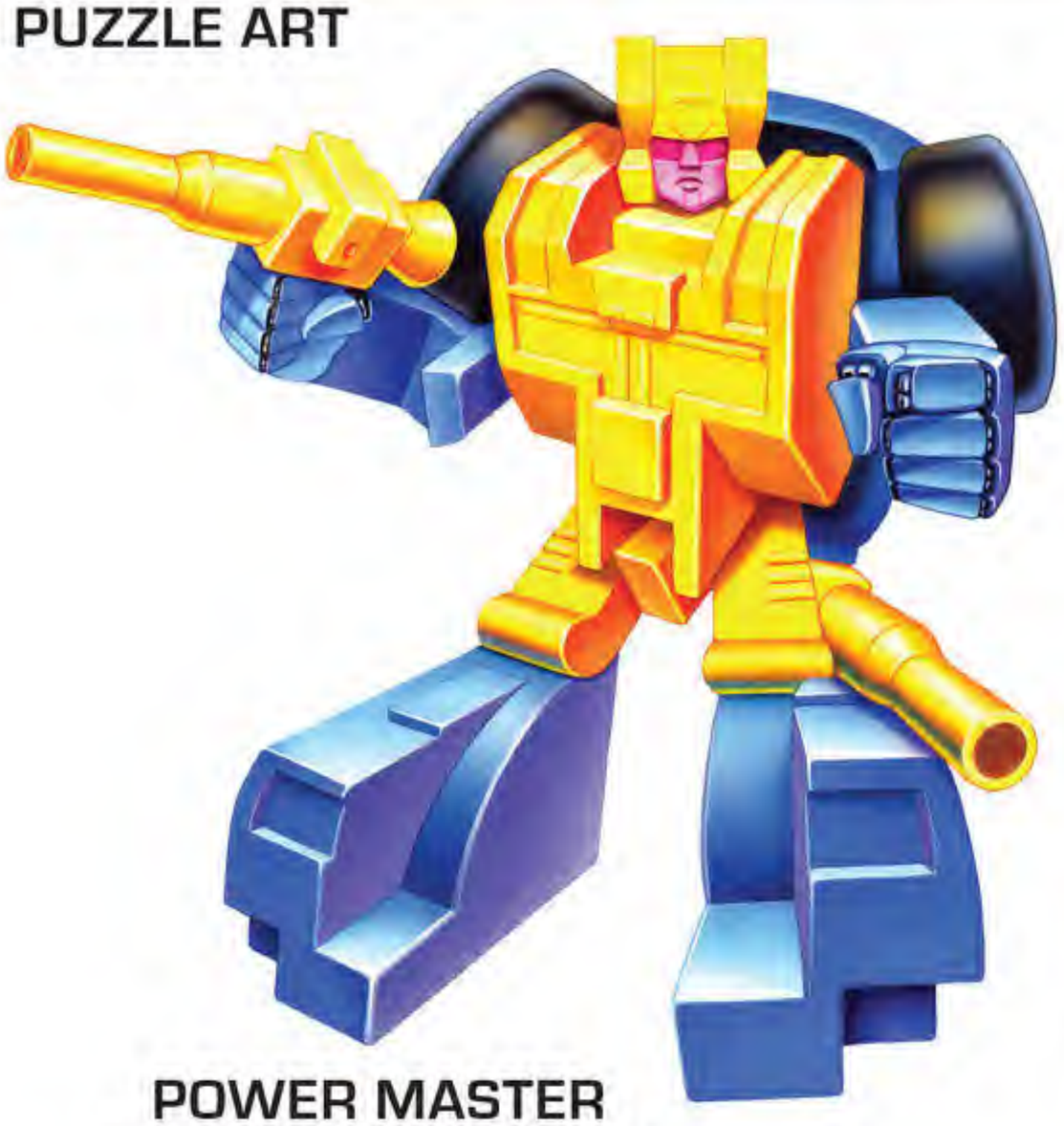
BLAZE

SIZZLE

PIRANHA

BLITZ

PUZZLE ART



POWER MASTER
TEST ILLUSTRATION

MEANSTREAK

BULLET BIKE

IRONHIDE

PUZZLE ART

UK PUZZLE ART

OPTIMUS PRIME
(GENERATION 2)

MEGATRON
(JAPANESE GIFT SET VARIANT)

FRENZY
(SILVER WEAPON VARIANT)

AFTERWORD

When thinking about our favorite Autobots and Decepticons from yesteryear, most fans probably think of their cartoon appearance. It's understandable: the cartoon was what gripped us every day after school, giving voice and personality to these characters, even if the animation models tended to greatly simplify or discard the intricate details of the toys upon which they were based.

But not me: I think of their box art.

Before the cartoon hit the airwaves, I remember first encountering the Transformers in the toy section of local department stores. I could see the toy beneath the clear plastic, of course, but it was the character art beside it that immediately caught my young eye: the promise of what this car or jet or cassette could become.

Unlike the cartoon, the package art was extremely faithful to the toy. The precisely-drafted linework, the faithful airbrushed colors and the respectful attention to detail made each piece something special, a companion to the toy that imparted a sense of urgency to otherwise inanimate plastic and metal. Every warlike mouthplate and visor, every latent wing and wheel, every little piece of post-transform kibble was maintained. The package art seemed to offer the promise that these alien robots could be real.

I can even credit the box art with getting me back into Transformers many years later. Like many kids, when I discovered the opposite sex and MTV, toys lost their interest. Carefully packed into a cardboard box and hidden in the basement, the Transformers were largely forgotten during my high school and college years. It was in my early 20s, killing time at a temp job in Manhattan, that I started surfing this new thing called "the Internet." Eventually I happened to search for "transformers" and quickly came upon a picture of Megatron's iconic box art. Staring at his brandished fusion cannon, his iconic icy colors, and his self-assured "peace through tyranny" expression and posture, I immediately experienced that same sensation I had as a boy when I first saw this art. I saved it and every other box art image I could find to floppy disc, made a mental note to fetch that cardboard box from my mother's basement and... well, today that collection of Transformers has grown from a few dozen to hundreds. All thanks to the box art.

These days the Transformers are seemingly more popular than ever. Between the movies and the continuing success of the toy franchise, I doubt there are any children of the '80s who need reminding that the Transformers exist. Still, I suspect that there are at least a few lapsed fans who will see this book, flip through the pages, and re-experience that same rush of nostalgia that they had when they first stared through young eyes at a wall of Robots in Disguise and the box art that accompanied them.

- Adam Alexander, aka "Botch the Crab"

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book, perhaps more than any other we've worked on in the past, would not have been possible without the help of a great many dedicated professionals and fans.

To each of the artists who created the many lavish illustrations in this book, a massive thank-you. We would especially like to thank those who took the time to share their recollections with the authors of this book, namely Allison Boisselle, Doug Hart, Bob Lavoie, Jeff Mangiat, Richard Marcej, Andy Perlmutter, David Schleinkofer, Shin Ueda, and Mark Watts.

Vast swaths of this book were made possible by the care and expertise of Rik Alvarez and Part One's Andrew Hall. They scoured through their personal archives for this project and shared many fascinating pieces.

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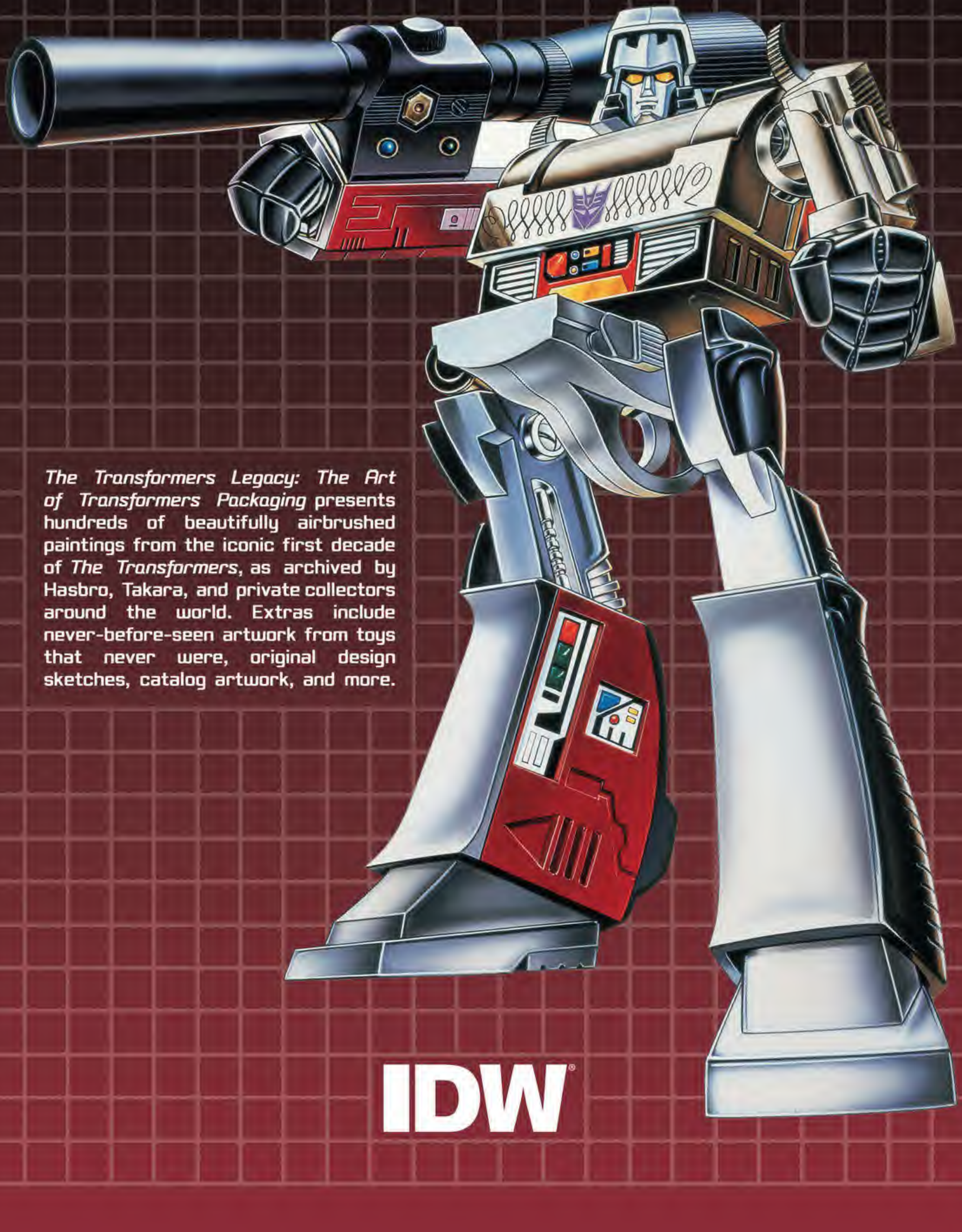
And finally, we'd like to once again thank the fans for their continued support. We do this for you. If you have any feedback we'd love to hear from you at transformerstheark@yahoo.com.

Bill & Jim

MOTORMASTER
with Japanese Alterations

"The unique aesthetic of the package art of The Transformers became closely identified with the brand. It would prove one of the more popular licensing elements, appearing on lunchboxes, bedsheets, puzzles, backpacks, pajamas, pencil sharpeners, games, cereal, towels, calendars, sunglasses, stickers, trading cards, and just about anything else you can imagine." — *Jim Sorenson*



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